

Conducting a Program Evaluation Thesis or Dissertation:

*It's More Than Replacing Research Questions with
Evaluation Questions*

Tamara M. Walser
walsert@uncw.edu

University of North Carolina Wilmington





6 Key Points of Departure

Consider the evaluation problem

Consider the evaluation problem

Understand the program and program context

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Involve stakeholders

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Involve stakeholders

Choose an evaluation approach

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Establish trustworthiness

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Provide useful findings



Guidance from the Literature

Krathwohl & Smith (2005):

*How to Prepare a Dissertation Proposal:
Suggestions for Students in Education and the
Social and Behavioral Sciences*

Applied or basic research

Audiences for the evaluation

Stakeholders for the evaluation

How criteria for judging progress or merit will be defined and by whom

Evaluation approach will be used

Willis, Inman, and Valenti (2010):

*Completing a Professional Practice Dissertation:
A Guide for Doctoral Students and Faculty*

To evaluate the **universal** effectiveness of a professional practice

To evaluate the **local** effectiveness of a professional practice

Walser & Trevisan (2015):

*Evaluability Assessment Thesis and Dissertation
Studies in Graduate Professional Degree
Programs: Review and Recommendations*

Be clear about approach/model

Involve stakeholders

Control for biases and conflict of interest

Provide evidence of trustworthiness

Consider contributions to professional and academic knowledge

Evaluation faculty provide support to professional programs



Department of Educational Leadership

In Practice



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Evaluation Problem

What is an evaluation problem?

Evaluation Problem

Research Problem

Literature-focused:

What we know about the study topic

What we don't know about the study topic

Evaluation Problem

Research Problem	Evaluation Problem
Literature-focused: What we know about the study topic	Literature-focused: What we know about the <u>program</u>
What we don't know about the study topic	What we don't know about the <u>program</u>

Evaluation Problem

Research Problem	Evaluation Problem
<p>Literature-focused: What we know about the study topic</p> <p>What we don't know about the study topic</p>	<p>Literature-focused: What we know about the program</p> <p>What we don't know about the program</p>
	<p>Locally-focused: What we know about the need for the program</p> <p>What we know about the need for the evaluation</p>

Evaluation Problem

Where Does It Go?

Introduction

Problem Statement

Evaluation Purpose

Evaluation Questions

Literature Review

Discussion



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Program and Program Context

Focusing the evaluation

Program and Program Context

Where Does It Go?

Introduction

Problem Statement

Overview of program

Literature Review

Methods

Program Description

Study Site(s) and Participants



Consider the evaluation problem

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Provide useful findings

Stakeholders

As data sources **AND** to support the planning, design, conduct, dissemination, and use of the evaluation

Stakeholders

Where Does It Go?

Methods

Stakeholder Involvement



Consider the evaluation problem

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Evaluation Approach

Or approaches

Evaluation Approach

Where Does It Go?

Methods

Evaluation Approach(es)

Literature Review

Evaluation Approach(es)



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Provide useful findings

Trustworthiness

Resources

American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators (2004)

The Program Evaluation Standards (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011)

American Evaluation Association Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation (2011)

Trustworthiness

Where Does It Go?

Methods

Trustworthiness



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Provide useful findings

I can't tell you
how valuable
your program is



Researcher

I can



Evaluator

Useful Findings

Useful to the program...

AND

Useful to the field

Useful Findings

Where Does It Go?

Discussion

Recommendations for the program

How recommendations are being used/going to be used

Implications for practice, future evaluation and research



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Challenges

Understanding of program evaluation

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Understanding of program evaluation

The single course in program evaluation

Challenges

Understanding of program evaluation

The single course in program evaluation

**Acceptability of a program evaluation
dissertation**

Opportunities

Building evaluation capacity

Opportunities

Building evaluation capacity

Contributing to knowledge

Opportunities

Building evaluation capacity

Contributing to knowledge

Promoting program evaluation

Questions, Input, Etc.



Thank you!



References

Krathwohl, D. R., & Smith, N. L. (2005). *How to prepare a dissertation proposal: Suggestions for students in education and the social and behavioral sciences*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Walser, T. M., & Trevisan, M. S. (2015). Evaluability assessment thesis and dissertation studies in graduate professional degree programs: Review and recommendations. *American Journal of Evaluation* (OnlineFirst May 26, 2015). doi: 10.1177/1098214015583693

Willis, J., Inman, D., & Valenti, R. (2010). *Completing a professional practice dissertation: A guide for doctoral students and faculty*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

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