What Can We Learn From a Collection of Over 500 Evaluation Reports?

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Overview

The goal of the Building Informal Science Education (BISE) project is to explore what might be learned from secondary analysis of evaluation reports on informalscience.org.

Research Question

In what ways might the evaluation and research community use a collection of evaluation reports to generate and share useful new knowledge?

Method

Researchers synthesized evaluation reports around a particular issue within ISE. Their syntheses were focused on exploring general lessons that might be learned by systematically combining or comparing findings across individual evaluations. Together, the papers represent a feasibility test for using databases of evaluation reports as a potential source for field-wide, generalizable knowledge.

Audiences

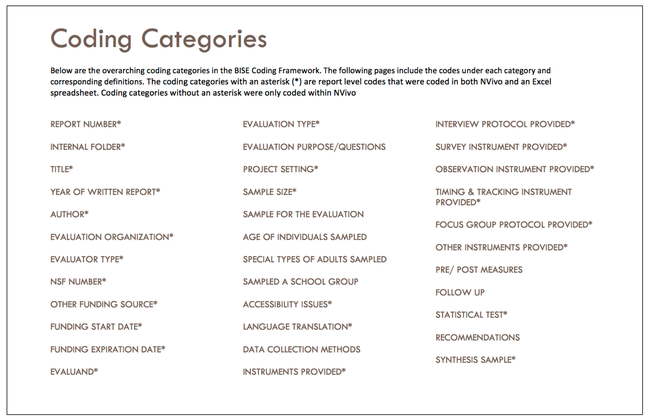
The BISE resources and papers are meant for a wide range of professionals including evaluators, researchers, and practitioners.

Challenges

The biggest challenge was coding and synthesizing across reports that have varying levels of detail about an evaluation. For instance, we were unable to reliably code subject area across the reports because of inconsistencies in project descriptions.

Project Resources

Coding Framework

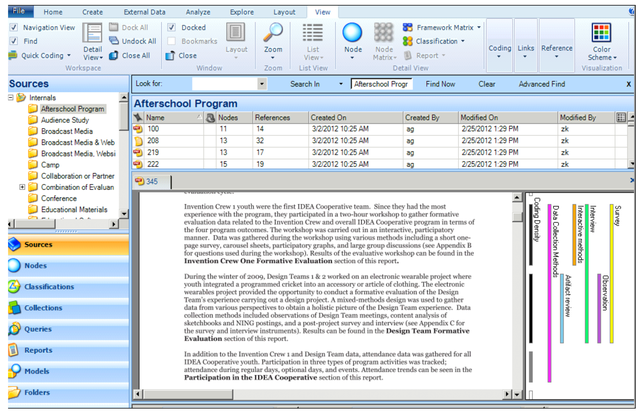


Coding Categories

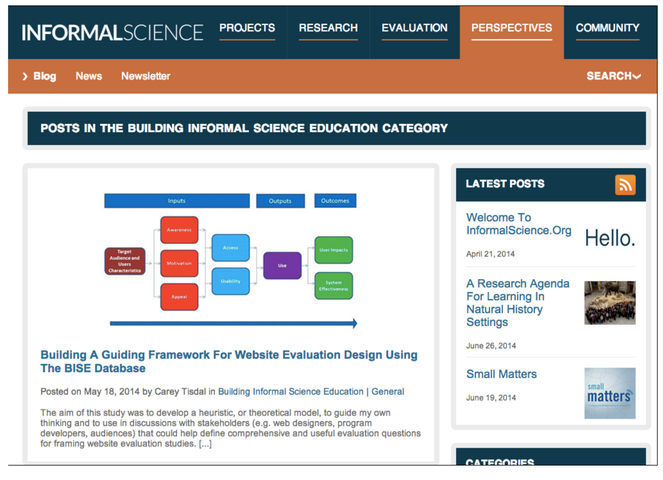
Below are the overarching coding categories in the BISE Coding Framework. The following pages include the codes under each category and corresponding definitions. The coding categories with an asterisk (*) are report level codes that were coded in both NVivo and an Excel spreadsheet. Coding categories without an asterisk were only coded within NVivo

REPORT NUMBER*
INTERNAL FOLDER*
TITLE*
YEAR OF WRITTEN REPORT*
AUTHOR*
EVALUATION ORGANIZATION*
EVALUATOR TYPE*
NSF NUMBER*
OTHER FUNDING SOURCE*
FUNDING START DATE*
FUNDING EXPIRATION DATE*
EVALUAND*
EVALUATION TYPE*
EVALUATION PURPOSE/QUESTIONS
PROJECT SETTING*
SAMPLE SIZE*
SAMPLE FOR THE EVALUATION
AGE OF INDIVIDUALS SAMPLED
SPECIAL TYPES OF ADULTS SAMPLED
SAMPLED A SCHOOL GROUP
ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES*
LANGUAGE TRANSLATION*
DATA COLLECTION METHODS
INSTRUMENTS PROVIDED*
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL PROVIDED*
SURVEY INSTRUMENT PROVIDED*
OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT PROVIDED*
TIMING & TRACKING INSTRUMENT PROVIDED*
FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL PROVIDED*
OTHER INSTRUMENTS PROVIDED*
PRE/ POST MEASURES
FOLLOW UP
STATISTICAL TEST*
RECOMMENDATIONS
SYNTHESIS SAMPLE*

Nvivo Database of 520 Coded Reports



Spreadsheet of Report Level Attributes



Additional Resources

- EndNote File
- Folder of all 520 reports
- Excel spreadsheet of coded reports

Synthesis Papers

Six syntheses were carried out, two by the BISE project team, three from VSA-contracted authors, and one from an evaluation graduate student. The papers address the following overarching questions.

- Across the website-related reports in the BISE database, what was the range of evaluation focus areas?
- Museums are increasingly engaging with their communities in understanding and addressing the complex questions of our society. How is this effort manifested in museum practice, and what is the impact of this work?
- What recommendations and advice are provided through summative evaluations of exhibitions?
- How are media projects typically evaluated and how do they show changes in design, knowledge outcomes, and increases in interest and engagement in STEM?
- If the evaluation field wants to learn from evaluation reports on informalscience.org and similar types of repositories, how can evaluators help to ensure the reports they post are useful to other evaluators?
- As public libraries shape our agenda for STEM program evaluation, what can we learn from outcome evaluation of other ISE projects?

The BISE resources and papers can be found at *visitorstudies.org/bise*

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