

Biting the Evaluative Bullet



Demonstration session at the conference of the **American Evaluation Association**
Minneapolis, MN - October 26, 2012

Michael Scriven



Jane Davidson

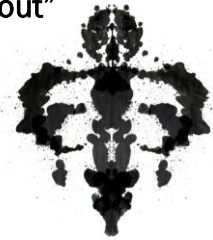


Syd King



the Rorschach inkblot

“You work it out”



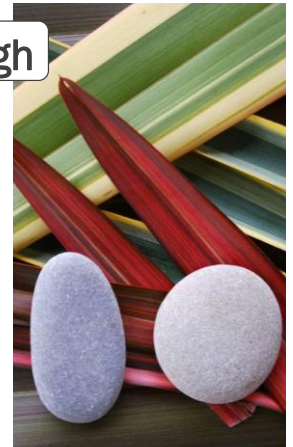
divine judgment

And lo, I looked upon it and saw that it was good



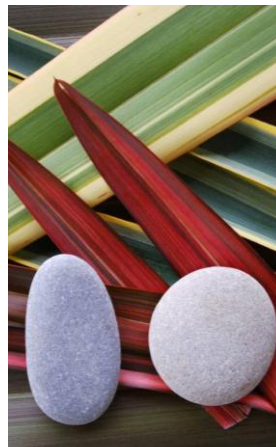
not good enough

these types of evaluation are **incomplete, unconvincing, and not credible**

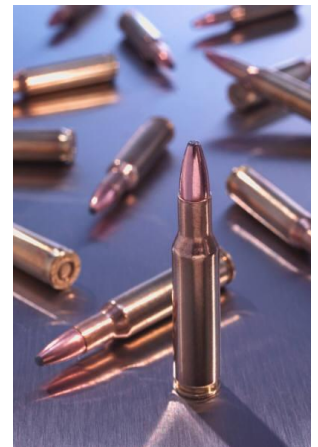


reasoning

evaluation is about **well-reasoned answers** to important questions



why are we still not biting the **evaluative bullet?**



1a.
**evaluation
anxiety**



1b.
**lack of
evaluative
attitude**



2.
**value-free
thinking**

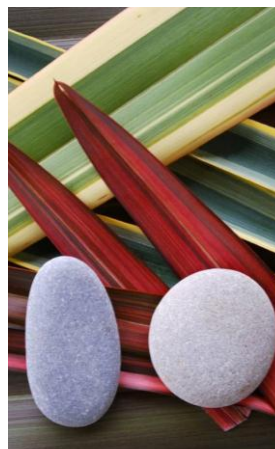


3.
poor grasp of
**evaluation-
specific
methods**



key concepts

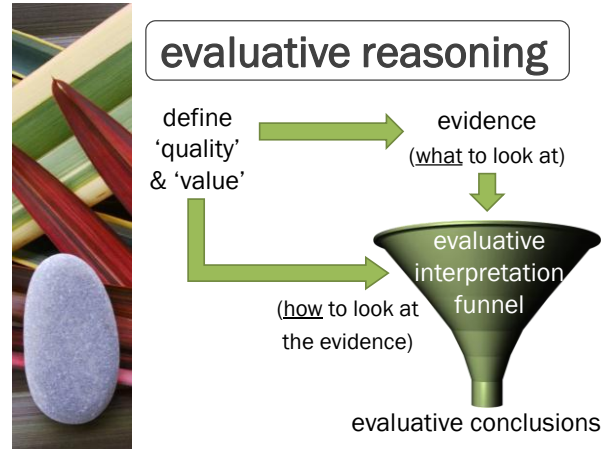
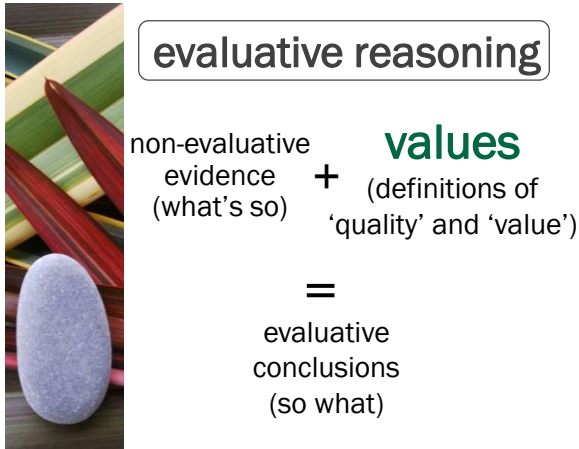
evaluation as
the systematic
determination of
**merit,
worth, or
significance**



key concepts

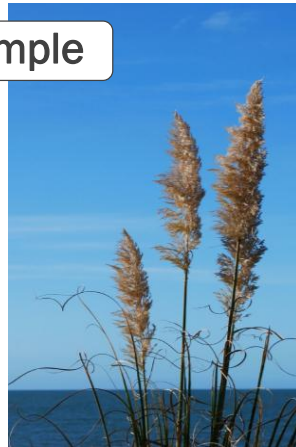
**high-level
evaluative
questions**
as the frame for
an evaluation





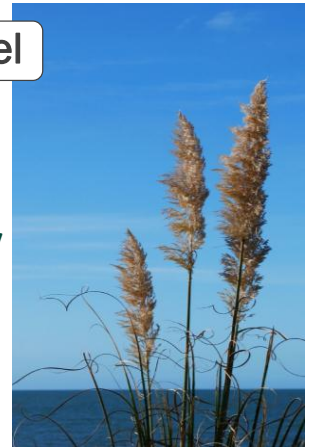
the NZQA example

Sector-wide shift to **evaluative quality assurance**



blended model

Emphasis on **accountability through self-assessment**



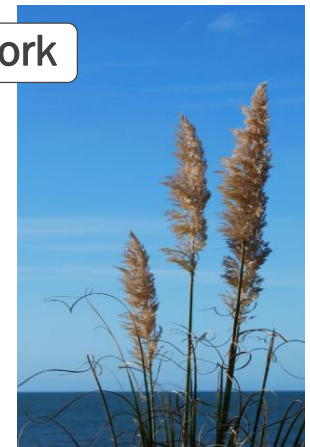
evaluator's lament

primarily descriptive
few evaluative conclusions



NZQA framework

evaluation tools and **evaluation process**



evaluation tools

- Principles / key features
- Questions
- Merit criteria
- Performance criteria
- **evaluative conclusions**



evaluation process

- Evaluation design
- Inquiry process
- Evidence in relation to questions
- Synthesis
- **evaluative conclusions**



what's really important

- (a) for getting the evaluation right
- (b) about the subject and/or its context
- and how they relate and interact



discover,
not impose



quality and
value



key evaluation questions

- Quality
- Value
- Needs



key evaluation questions

How well do programs and activities match the needs of learners & other stakeholders?

What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?



merit criteria / indicators

the evidence we might look at to see if performance is 'good'



Outcome indicator	Why the indicator is important	Some prompts to aid evaluative conversations	Evidence could include	Background information
Graduates gain employment, engage with further study and/or contribute positively to their local and wider communities.	Tertiary education benefits learners and society through longer term outcomes, which ultimately contribute to the economic, social and cultural well-being of individuals, communities and the nation.	How well does the TED make the connection between longer term outcomes (employment, further study, community involvement) and the shorter term outcomes (or outputs) of tertiary study?	Evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> employment outcomes career advancement creative enterprise voluntary work community/iwi participation further achievement in scholarship, research, publications or awards Taken from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> alumni information graduate surveys employer surveys economic trend data societal trend data census data ... indicating improving trends that are plausibly associated with tertiary study.	Tertiary education is increasingly associated with the development of 'human capital' in the broadest sense, where schooled knowledge and personnel are seen as appropriate for a wide variety of social positions, and in which many more young people are ... appropriate candidates for higher education (Schoefer et al 2005) (Contributing to the notion of the 'educated citizen' who engages constructively with society and the economy). There is widespread recognition of the importance of tertiary education as a major driver of economic competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy (Satag et al 2008).

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Outcome Indicator	Why the indicator is important	Prompts	Evidence	Background Information
Learners complete courses and gain qualifications.	Successful course and/or qualification completion are indicators of a learner's readiness for employment, further learning or community engagement.
Learners acquire useful/meaningful skills and knowledge and develop their cognitive abilities (including learning to learn and self-management).	Many positive and important outcomes result from or are influenced by engagement with tertiary education – often beyond the specific context of the course or qualification.

performance criteria/rubrics

What does "really good" look like?



Rating	Performance Descriptors for Answering Key Evaluation Questions
Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance is clearly exemplary in relation to the question. • Very few or no gaps or weaknesses. • Any gaps or weaknesses have no significant impact and are managed effectively.
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance is generally strong in relation to the question. • Few gaps or weaknesses. • Gaps or weaknesses have some impact but are mostly managed effectively.
Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance is inconsistent in relation to the question. • Some gaps or weaknesses have impact, and are not managed effectively. • Meets minimum expectations/requirements1 as far as can be determined
Poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance is unacceptably weak in relation to the question. • Significant gaps or weaknesses are not managed effectively. • Does not meet minimum expectations/requirements

Source: NZQA's External Evaluation & Review framework

evaluative inference

e.g. when rating "Good"	you need to show ...
Performance is generally strong in relation to the question.	Specifically, what evidence led you to believe performance was "generally strong" – as opposed to "clearly very strong or exemplary" (excellent) or "inconsistent" (adequate)?
Few gaps or weaknesses.	What were the gaps or weaknesses, and why should they be considered "few" in number?
Gaps or weaknesses have some impact ... but are mostly managed effectively.	What impact do the gaps and weaknesses have? What, specifically, is the TED doing to manage these gaps and weaknesses, and is this "effective management"?

tension

detailed criteria

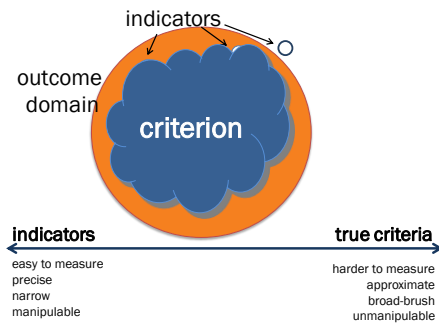
(clear, but potentially prescriptive)

broader criteria

(higher level of judgement, but potentially free-floating)



Why rubrics?
Why not just indicators?



judgment & reasoning

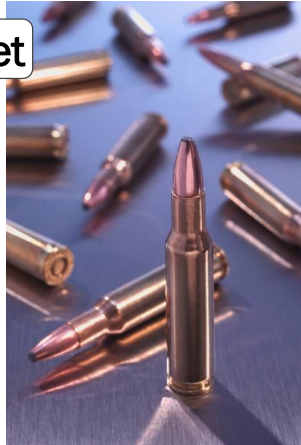
- These frameworks require:
- intelligent, informed, **human judgment**
 - a 'judgment reaching' process that is utterly **transparent**

→ logical explanation of the reasoning is hugely important



biting the bullet

1. Evaluation anxiety, evaluative attitude
2. Value-free thinking
3. Weak grasp of evaluation-specific methods



Question 1

What's the culture needed to sustain a model like this?



Question 2

what depth of enquiry / explanation is required to produce a complete, convincing and credible evaluation report?



Question 3

Thoughts on strategies for external evaluators to model good evaluation practice to the TEOs?

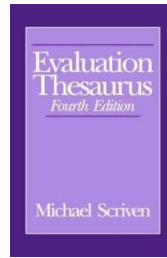


Question 4

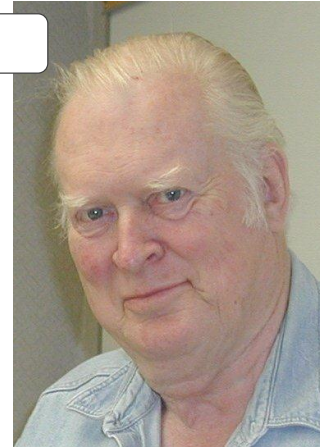
Thoughts on how to evaluate the design and implementation of this system?



resources



<http://MichaelScriven.info>



resources




actionable evaluation basics





Getting succinct answers to the most important questions
E. Jane Davidson, Ph.D.

where it fits


6. actionable insights 

5. succinct reporting 

4. reasoned answers 

1. clear purpose 

2. right engagement 

3. important questions 

resources



www.nzqa.govt.nz

syd.king@nzqa.govt.nz

