

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM

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It is somehow appropriate that this special edition of the *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* is being prepared as the century comes to an end. Millennial events invite us to look backwards even as we plan for the future. Forty years ago, the field of program evaluation hardly existed and certainly bore little resemblance to what we know today. In the United States, the giants of the field — Scriven, Stake, Stufflebeam, Weiss, and the like — were just beginning to wrestle with what it meant to evaluate a program, as opposed to carry out research into it. The models and concepts that they laid down are still essential to the way we think about program evaluation. Furthermore, most of these early pioneers in the field are still very active; Scriven is President of the American Evaluation Association, and I recall keynote speeches by many of the others at recent conferences.

A consequence of such sustained and intellectually powerful commitment to the field is that a certain world view of program evaluation has dominated. It is not a monolithic world view, by any means — panel discussions featuring the conference headliners can still be lively events — but it is one that is rooted in a social justice view of the world, the view that drove the US federal government to launch the massive intervention programs of the sixties and seventies that gave rise to the whole field of program evaluation.

The contribution of Canada to the field of program evaluation has been to bring a different perspective, one with its origins in government program oversight (Rutman & Mayne, 1985), an accountability paradigm. This emphasis has been picked up around the world and is now one of the most pervasive orientations to program evaluation. What is interesting is to watch how educational evaluation, with its very different orientation, has reacted to the rise of this paradigm. Several papers in this issue offer cases in point. They

range from instances where the precepts of the accountability model have been incorporated into educational evaluations, through some judicious examinations of the appropriateness of such a model to an educational setting, to a vehement reassertion of the social imperatives of program evaluation. Collectively, the papers in this issue capture an important moment in time where the hopes and aspirations of educational evaluation, as they were originally conceived, are being challenged by new emphases on accountability and cost effectiveness. It will be interesting to see how this tension is resolved in the next millennium.

I wish to thank several people who have been instrumental in the development of this special issue. I convened a special panel of reviewers for this issue and to them go my thanks for their timely and insightful reviews. I invited Les McLean, one of Canada's foremost educational evaluators, to examine the papers in light of his vast experience; his cogent remarks appear as a fitting pendant to the issue. Bob Segsworth, the editor of the journal, supported me along the way and gave me a new appreciation of the herculean labours of a journal editor. And finally, I thank the authors who responded to the invitation with a set of papers that fittingly mark a significant moment in the development of the field of educational evaluation.

REFERENCE

- Rutman, L., & Mayne, J. (1985). Institutionalization of program evaluation in Canada: The federal level. *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, 25, 61–68.