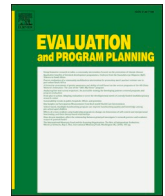


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Editorial

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The Evaluation and Program Planning (EPP) 100th issue marks a significant achievement. I am honored to have contributed to this scientific endeavor since 2015, first as an Associate Editor and then as Editor-in-Chief in 2019. Dr. Jonathan Morrell started this ambitious and fulfilling enterprise twenty years ago in a different political climate. In this editorial, I will briefly reconstruct how the journal has developed since I inherited it from its founder.

Over the past twenty years, within public and non-profit organizations, evaluation has affirmed itself as a social praxis and a democratic function of governments and parliaments in the North and many parts of the Global South. Public agencies have enacted policies for measuring performance and impact alongside non-profits, private companies, and international organizations, including the EU, UN, World Bank, and the IMF.

Evaluation policies have received sustained bipartisan consensus. Both left- and right-wing supporters have endorsed evaluation to improve governance, promoting liberal values of entrepreneurial governance, sustainable development, and democratic accountability. This transformative mission has not always kept its promises. As noted elsewhere (Marra, 2017, 2021), evaluation performance regimes have predominately operated through quantitative targets that have narrowed the focus of policymaking, while creating information effects and perverse organizational incentives. Yet, EPP has helped critically trace the trajectories of evaluation systems not only in the West but also in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

This 100th issue accounts for this debate, covering past, present, and future topics the editorial team intends to further develop by engaging with the international evaluation community. In this issue, Kinarsky and Christie analyze evaluation policies in US philanthropy. Connors et al. explore the value of pro-bono evaluation to build evaluator competencies and strengthen organizational capacity; the study by Gernert et al. examines the German experience of applying evaluative logic models in workplace health promotion. These articles review evaluation policies that use resources to assess interventions of different scales in multi-level governance structures and relations. And as public and private actors have committed to verifying complex program impacts, EPP has encouraged managers and decision-makers to use evaluation information for planning and implementation, embracing Evidence-Informed Policymaking, as the the articles by Betron's et al., Iniesta et al., and Jepson's et al. show in this issue.

EPP readers can learn global evaluation practices for regional development, economic geography, education interventions, and program implementation through the many case-study analyses published by the journal. Contributions in these domains have remained the backbone of EPP editorial choices, while new themes and fields of study

have come to the fore. EPP articles in public health have significantly increased in the past years following the COVID-19 pandemic and the special issue on HIV program assessment coordinated by the US Center for Disease Control. In addition, the recent special issues on e-governance, university societal impact, and the quality of life – partially included in this issue respectively with the article by Cembranel et al. and the introductory piece by Potluka – have researched emerging topics that have grown high on the international political agenda.

The 100th issue continues the tradition of the data-driven and case-based approach that distinctively characterizes EPP editorial policy. Betran's and Delgado's article on cash transfers in Mexico and Janbani's and Kumar's studies on education and health programs in Iran and India show outcome and performance analyses across welfare programs. In the same vein, Walsh investigates street doctors' intervention against violence in Northern Ireland; Ma examines the fidelity of program implementation for school renewal. The lessons learned in physical activity resumption programs characterize the contribution by Vuillemin's et al., while Pradhan et al. offer a critical report on the impact of foreign aid on institutional quality in middle-income countries. Readers can appreciate the variety of empirical investigations that present a broad spectrum of evaluation issues from different angles.

Regarding evaluation approaches, this 100th issue highlights the developmental design for Responsible Research and Innovation by Kalpazidou-Schmidt and the neural network analysis by Çakmak et al.. As EPP has committed to methodological pluralism, the journal has published studies ranging from experiments to theories of change, from counterfactuals to multivariate statistics, with quantitative and qualitative analyses. In addition, digital tools, refined instruments (see Némethné et al in this issue), sophisticated techniques in efficiency analysis (see Attari's et al. article), and complexity-sensitive frameworks have introduced innovative approaches that will find increasing space in future publications.

From a theoretical perspective, EPP articles have drawn on economic frameworks, with the Public Choice theory and the New Public Management to explain allocative efficiency, organizational performance, and principal-agent interactions. Governance and state reform studies within the sociological and political science tradition have informed evaluative analyses on institutional working, organizational learning, and performance management. Following the principles of participatory and culturally responsive evaluation, the journal has explored management and community-based practices, and entrepreneurship — see the article by Gokiart et al., and Ouni and Younes in this issue . Over time, many articles have examined public managers facing uncertain contextual conditions, ambiguous program results, and limited rationality in public choices. Lessons learned have meant to strengthen

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adaptive organizational capacity for future planning. For instance, Risien in this issue proposes a dynamic framework for making sense of partnerships between universities and informal education providers.

As noted earlier, the EPP debate on theories and methods has favored approaches that enable practitioners to critically question the premises they implicitly apply in program design and implementation. By looking into the tacit dimension of contextual knowledge (Polanyi, 1966), EPP has helped form an evaluation theory based on practice observation. In this vein, editorial choices have preferred articles that externalize the implicit know-how that evaluators, program staff, decision-makers, beneficiaries, and all other stakeholders share in their dealings. EPP contributions recognize and value this situational knowledge associated with program variables, evaluation purposes, evaluator experience and credibility as well as the intended users, politics, and the resource constraints of the setting where evaluation occurs (Patton, 2011). Accordingly, evaluation is not only *techné*—that is, approaches and techniques—but also *metis* — that is, beliefs and values shared in customary practices that explain the heterogeneity of contexts and the non-standardized nature of interventions.

EPP has promoted this capacity for evaluation to grasp program and context diversity, thus nurturing a democratic mindset against any rhetoric of intransigence (Hirschman, 1991). EPP has also endorsed an understanding of evaluation as a collective action against barriers of

class, race, age, gender, national identity, and ethnic belonging. These ethical and political dimensions that EPP has sought in the articles published thus far have economic implications. In my research on digital transformation, I have discovered that as actors interact, they create knowledge-based value that can innovate production. This unique contribution, EPP articles seek to dig out and disseminate, neither artificial intelligence nor algorithms can standardize or replicate.

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