



Encyclopedia of Evaluation

By Sandra Mathison

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The **Encyclopedia of Evaluation** is an authoritative, first-of-its-kind who, what, where, why, and how of the field of evaluation. Covering professional practice as well as academia, this volume chronicles the development of the field?its history, key figures, theories, approaches, and goals. From the leading publisher in the field of evaluation, this work is a must-have for all social science libraries, departments that offer courses in evaluation, and students and professional evaluators around the world. The entries in this Encyclopedia capture the essence of evaluation as a practice (methods, techniques, roles, people), as a profession (professional obligations, shared knowledge, ethical imperatives, events, places) and as a discipline (theories and models of evaluation, ontological and epistemological issues).

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Encyclopedia of Evaluation By Sandra Mathison Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2393245 in Books
- Brand: Brand: SAGE Publications, Inc
- Published on: 2004-10-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 11.02" h x 1.13" w x 8.50" l, 3.63 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 520 pages

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Editorial Review

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Emphasis in this work is on "the components that make evaluation a *practice, profession, and discipline*." The audience is defined as "practitioners, theorists, and the public." The helpful readers' guide provides an overview of the types of information included. Concepts (*Accountability, Peer review, Subjectivity*); ethics and standards (*Impartiality, Informed consent*); approaches and models (*Accreditation, Multicultural evaluation*); organizations (*ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation, National Institutes of Health*); and qualitative and quantitative methods (*Checklists, Matrix sampling*) are some of the areas that are covered. The more than 600 entries vary from a single paragraph to several pages in length, and many are accompanied by one or more suggested further-reading citations.

As explained in the preface, most of the literature on evaluation comes from the U.S., and the U.S. has a history of strong government support for evaluation. Nevertheless, the encyclopedia attempts to present an international perspective. Scattered throughout are boxes labeled "Evaluation Practice around the World" that describe a problem or issue in a specific country, such as Germany or Spain. One puzzling feature of the work is the more than 120 brief biographies of researchers and practitioners, a number of whom are also contributors. The profiles mostly describe career paths, and although of interest to fellow practitioners, they offer little to the general user looking for explanations and definitions.

The encyclopedia will be most useful in academic libraries and institutions with evaluation programs, though large public libraries should consider it. *Linda Loos Scarth*
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Review

In this new encyclopedia, veteran professor of education Sandra Mathison leads a team of 108 contributing experts in documenting the development of the field of evaluation and in defining its fundamental concepts and methods. . . . This groundbreaking guide should serve both students and professionals in evaluation. (John R.M. Lawrence *Lawrence Looks at Books* 2005-06-01)

"The helpful readers' guide provides an overview of the types of information included. Concepts, ethics, approaches and models, organizations, and qualitative and quantitative methods are some of the areas that are covered. The encyclopedia will be most useful in academic libraries and institutions with evaluation programs." (Linda Scarth 2006-09-18)

About the Author

Sandra Mathison is a Professor of Education at the University of British Columbia, Canada. She has been conducting evaluations, primarily in educational settings, for more than 25 years. She began her career as an internal evaluator at a Canadian community college and has subsequently conducted dozens of external evaluations and served as the Director of Evaluation for the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project for three years. Over these many years and through these many opportunities to do and study evaluation, she has developed an interest in and contributed to evaluation through her emphasis on democratic principles and possibilities. A deep concern for the limitations and limiting nature of evaluation in schools runs throughout her work. Now more than ever, the nature of evaluation within schools constrains what it means to adequately determine what is good and bad in schools, and thus limits the possibilities for improvement. Her current research focuses on these limits of evaluation in schools. With funding from the National Science Foundation, she is conducting research on the effects of high stakes testing on teaching and

learning in elementary and middle schools. Mathison has written extensively about this topic in an effort to encourage a more informed public discourse about the value of schools and schooling. She chaired the American Evaluation Association task force that created a policy statement on high stakes testing in K-12 schooling. She is coeditor (with E. Wayne Ross) of *Defending Public Schools: The Nature and Limits of Standards Based Reform and Assessment*.

Users Review

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