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EDITORIAL



Editorial for “Educational evaluation research and practice: perspectives from Singapore”

It is with great pleasure that we present this special issue of the Asia-Pacific Journal of Education, titled “Educational evaluation research and practice: Perspectives from Singapore”. This collection explores the evolving landscape of educational evaluation with a particular emphasis on the unique contexts and challenges within Singapore. This special issue brings together innovative research, practices, and reflections in educational evaluation, celebrating the rich diversity and groundbreaking efforts taking place in this vibrant region. The contributions in this issue not only advance our understanding of educational evaluation in diverse settings but also offer valuable insights that can inform global practices.

The first article is an invited piece by Chen, Morosanu and Chen (“Aligning evaluation approaches with context: Reductionism, system thinking, and pragmatic synthesis”). Chen et al. proposes a fresh perspective on outcome evaluation by integrating problem-solving philosophies. The authors argue that traditional validity typology is suitable for reductionism-based programmes but not for systems thinking- or pragmatic synthesis-based programmes. This paper emphasizes the need for evaluation theories and approaches that align with community programmes, advocating for solutions addressing pragmatic synthesis-based interventions.

The second article, by Loh et al. (“Educational evaluation research in Asia: A scoping review”), provides a comprehensive examination of educational evaluation research in Asia over the past decade. Analysing 62 articles, the review uncovers prevalent methodologies and themes, with a dominant focus on learning, teaching, and assessment. Despite valuable insights, the review identifies gaps in leadership and evaluation tools, suggesting future research directions to enrich global discussions on educational evaluation.

The third article, by Lee and Liu (“Programme evaluation in action: Theory to practice from an Asian educational context”), examines the interplay between evaluation theory, policy, and practice within the Ministry of Education Headquarters in Singapore. The authors discuss how evaluation theory influences practice both from the ground up and top-down, addressing common challenges such as the tension between accountability and learning tools. This article provides valuable lessons on adapting Western-centric evaluation literature to Asian contexts, with implications for future research and practice.

The fourth article, by Ong, Lee & Leowardy (“Refining the quality of instruction dimension in the Opportunity to Learn construct through the Productive Disciplinary Engagement Framework”), revisits the quality of instruction dimension within the Opportunity to Learn (OTL) construct, utilizing the Productive Disciplinary Engagement (PDE) framework. By refining this dimension, the authors aim to provide a more robust measure that reflects contemporary understandings of science education. The revised construct, demonstrated through a case study of middle-school learners in Singapore, offers science educators and evaluators a reliable tool for assessing instructional quality and content coverage.

The fifth article, by Lim, Toh and Ong (“Assessing multiliteracies: A systematic review and a perspective from Singapore”), addresses the evolving literacy demands on students in the digital age. Through a systematic review covering studies from 2013 to 2023, the authors identify

key themes such as the importance of a metalanguage of multiliteracies, the productivity of multimodal analytical frameworks, and the prevailing focus on language and print literacies. Reflecting on their multiliteracies project in Singapore, they underscore the need for a shared pedagogic metalanguage to comprehensively assess students' learning and initiate a critical conversation on equitably assessing multiliteracies in anticipation of ongoing digital transformations.

In the sixth article [A critical evaluation of "paradoxical" leadership: (New) Natural Law Theory, Aristotelian "heresy" and the mending of nominalist bifurcations], Chua takes a critical look at the idea of paradoxical leadership, which claims that effective leaders should embrace and manage contradictions. Chua challenges this notion, arguing that paradoxical leadership can lead to ethical compromises and diminish criticality. Instead, he advocates for an Aristotelian approach to leadership that prioritizes coherence and moral integrity. By rejecting the acceptance of contradictions, Chua emphasizes the importance of ethical leadership grounded in practical reasonableness and strong moral principles, drawing on insights from Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy.

The seventh article, by Loh, Yeo and Kaur ("Teaching from the heart: An evaluation of award-winning teachers in Singapore"), delves into the practices and philosophies of award-winning teachers in Singapore. Highlighting three pivotal themes – Student-centred instructional approach, Optimization of Curriculum Materials, and Heart for students – the study reveals how these educators tailor methods to individual student needs. This analysis offers valuable insights for teacher education and professional development programmes, emphasizing the attributes that contribute to educational excellence.

The eighth article, by Chang ("Education practitioners' epistemological beliefs and their understanding of evaluation: A preliminary study in Singapore"), explores the relationship between educators' epistemological beliefs and their understanding of programme evaluation. Through a mixed-methods study, the authors investigate how these beliefs influence educators' learning outcomes in designing real-world evaluation studies within Masters-level coursework. The findings suggest significant impacts on the views of evaluation and the quality of evaluation plans, offering insights for teacher professional learning.

The ninth article, by Xie et al. ("A mixed methods evaluation of an ecological systems approach for supporting young children from low-income backgrounds in Singapore"), evaluates the NTUC First Campus (NFC) Child Support Model (CSM), which provides financial, social, and learning support to vulnerable children and families. Using a mixed methods design, the study assesses the effects of the CSM on children's language and cognitive outcomes and classroom engagement. The findings highlight the active ingredients contributing to positive outcomes, offering implications for similar support models worldwide.

We end the Special Issue with a Commentary from Chen. Chen, a renowned expert in public health and programme evaluation, brings a wealth of experience to this Special Issue's conclusion. His distinguished career spans diverse roles, from CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) branch chief to university professor, and includes evaluations of critical programmes in the US and East Asia. Chen's seminal work, "Theory-Driven Evaluations", has significantly shaped the field, while his ongoing research continues to advance evaluation methodologies. As an active member of the American Evaluation Association and recipient of prestigious awards, Chen's insights offer a valuable perspective informed by decades of practical application and theoretical development in programme evaluation.

This special issue underscores the critical role of educational evaluation in enhancing educational practices and outcomes across diverse contexts. The articles collectively highlight innovative methodologies and contextual considerations essential for effective educational evaluation. By drawing on experiences and insights from Singapore, this issue contributes to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of global educational evaluation practices. We hope that these contributions

inspire further research and foster a deeper appreciation for the complexities and innovations in educational evaluation.

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