



Canadian Evaluation Society

A Multi-Site, School-Based Program Evaluation: Lessons Learned



Canadian Evaluation Society
Annual Conference – Quebec City

May 11-14



A. Sidiq Ali, Ph.D. – Evaluation Consultant

Overview of Presentation



- Program Description
- Research Literature on MS,SB Programs
- Evaluation Questions
- Conducting the Evaluation
- Key Results
- Lessons Learned
- Discussion
- References

Program Description



● The Communication Program

- 1:8 teacher to student ratio; contained
- students with learning disabilities
- 62 classes; 28 schools (sites)
- spread-out geographically
- kindergarten to grade 8
- ≈ 500 students
- Accountability Framework*

*Ali (2006a, 2006b); Ali & Favaro (2007)

Research Literature on MS,SB Programs



- Multi-site (MS) is typical of school-based (SB) programs (Sanders, 2000)
- MS programs often suffer from decentralization of program and system edicts (Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, 1999)
- MS,SB programs are typical of most realized social programs – operating without articulated program theory (Weiss, 1998)

Evaluation Questions – Process



- What are the admission and demission criteria for the Communication Program across Field Offices?
- How is learning technology used in Communication Classrooms?
- What is the frequency and duration of integration of students in the Communication Program into regular classrooms?
- Where are intermediate students placed as they transition to secondary school?
- What are the strengths and areas for improvement in the implementation of the Communication Program?

Evaluation Questions – Impact



- What is the impact of the Communication Program on:
 - academic progress, resulting in demission?
 - students' reading skills?
 - students' reading attitudes
 - students' self-efficacy

Conducting the Evaluation



- Accountability Framework
- three school years
- site visits / observations
- document reviews
- key informant interviews
- focus groups
- surveys (teachers & admin)
- rating scales
- performance measurement

Key Results 1*

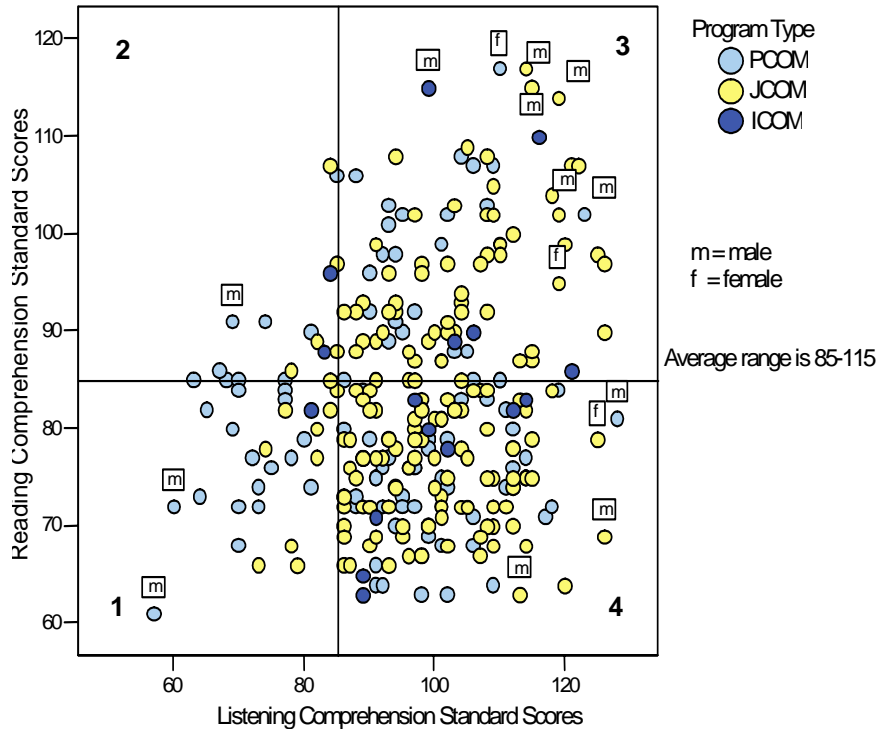


*Ali (2006)

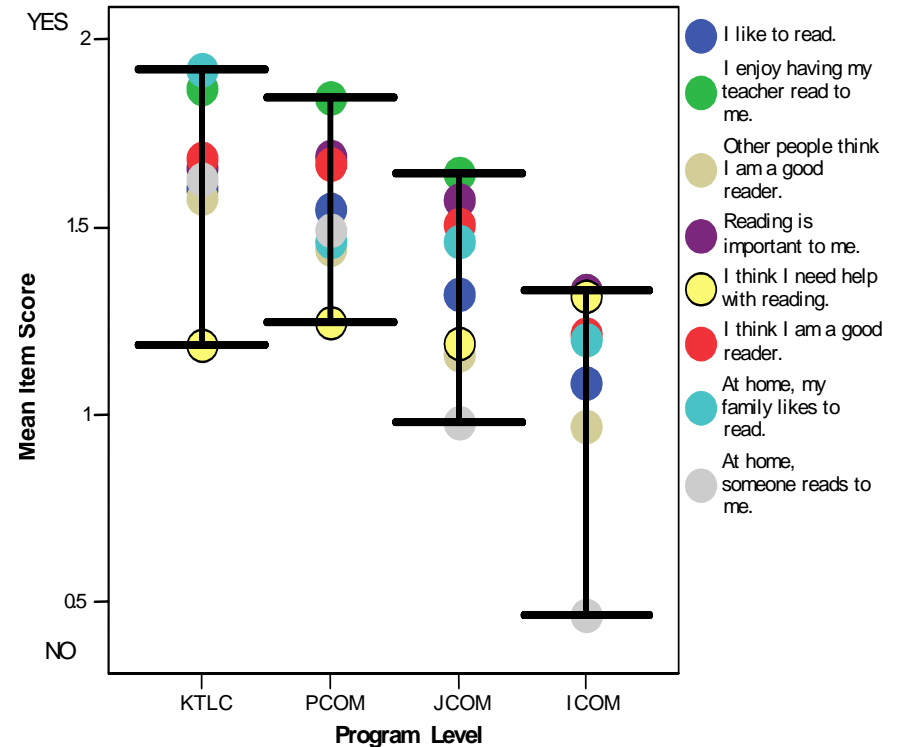
- variability in both admission and demission criteria
- variability in decision-making process at IPRC
- dynamics of decision-making process viewed by IPRC chairs as problematic
- integration predominantly for non-academic subjects
- integration varies by student, class, level, school and time of year

Key Results 2*

Performance Measures



Reading Attitudes



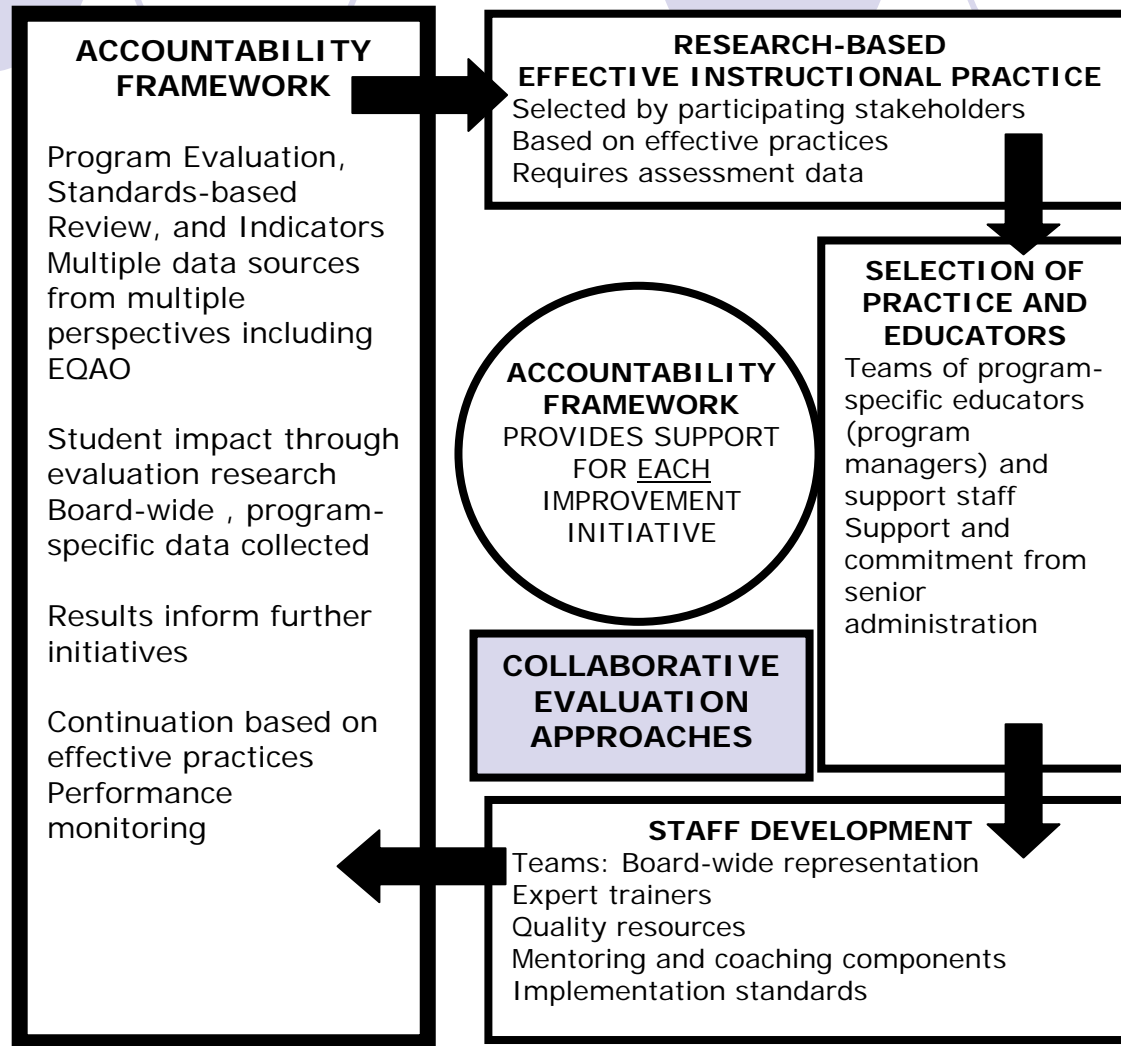
* Ali (2006)

Lessons Learned 1



- Dynamics of a three-year evaluation in schools
 - Lack of central administration effect
 - Program theory not clearly articulated
 - Inconsistency in program delivery
 - Penetrating the normative structure of schools
 - Participatory evaluation → Empowerment evaluation*
 - Accountability Framework
- *Cousins & Earl (1992, 1995); Earl, Ali & Lee (2005); Fetterman (1999); Hunter & Gambell (2000); MacLellan-Wright, et al., (2007); Morris (2002)

Lessons Learned 2



Note.
 Ali & Favaro (2007).
 Adapted from Little, M.E., & Houston, D. (2003).

Figure 1
 The Special Education Accountability Framework and Continuous Improvement

Discussion



- The role of program theory cannot be understated
- Implementation evaluation prior to outcome evaluation
- Collaborative approaches to evaluation
- Accountability

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