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The Program Assessment and Improvement Cycle Today: A New and Simple Taxonomy of General Types and Levels of Program Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

There has been strong pressure from just about every quarter in the last twenty years for higher education institutions to evaluate and improve their programs. This pressure is being exerted by several different stake holder groups simultaneously, and also represents the growing cumulative impact of four somewhat contradictory but powerful evaluation and improvement movements, models and advocacy groups. Consequently, the program assessment, evaluation and improvement cycle today is much different and far more complex than it was fifty years ago, or even two decades ago, and it is actually a highly diversified and confusing landscape from both the practitioner's and consumer's view of such evaluative and improvement information relative to seemingly different and competing advocacies, standards, foci, findings and asserted claims. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to present and begin to elucidate a relatively simple general taxonomy that helps practitioners, consumers, and professionals to make better sense of competing evaluation and improvement models, methodologies and results today, which should help to improve communication and understanding and to have a broad, simple and useful framework or schema to help guide their more detailed learning.

KEYWORDS

Program Evaluation; General Types of Program Evaluation; Program Evaluation Foci; A Program Evaluation Taxonomy; Program Life Cycles; Higher Education

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