




Research Article

EZ PLATE: A tool in Evaluating Educational Program

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Abstract: Education leaders need to proactively evaluate all programs planned and implemented in schools. The practice of program evaluation helps the process of improvement, revision, modification and risk planning on the implemented program. Despite the important benefits of evaluating programs, many program coordinators often are reluctant to evaluate their programs. The reluctance usually stems from a lack of understanding of the program evaluation process especially when they perceive evaluation as being too difficult, complicated and burdensome. Accordingly, school leaders and program coordinators need to be well equipped and properly trained with the knowledge and skills of the evaluation process. It is crucial in determining the effectiveness, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit of the program. Therefore, EZ PLATE intends to assist the school leaders' in conducting program evaluation in their schools. The objective of the template is to guide leaders regarding real evaluation processes which require immediate feedback on the effectiveness in achieving the program's objectives. The novelty of this template is that it is designed to allow evaluation, data analysis and reporting of the program's findings in a much shorter time frame. The template could also be utilized by other stakeholders such as auditors, decision-makers, heads of departments, top management leaders and heads of training units. Data can be shared and used as a benchmark for other functions such as program performance evaluation, individual competency evaluation and re-use by external agencies anytime, fast and accurately. By referring to the template, one can foster best practices in evaluating educational programs effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: Program evaluation, evaluation tool, best evaluation practices, Malaysian school leaders.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Aminuddin Baki Institute (IAB) is a center that is in charge of primary and secondary school leaders training in any kind of educational leadership and management courses. IAB is responsible for ensuring that every program implemented is capable of maximizing student success for every ringgit spent (Pelan Induk Kecemerlangan IAB (PIK IAB) 2017-2021; Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013 - 2025). School leaders need to act in a more direct, efficient and practical manner when handling any issues. They ought to think of a comprehensive way when analyzing the effectiveness and efficiency of the program. IAB, therefore, is responsible for creating and suggesting innovative tools for the program evaluation because it will enable leaders to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the

program (Kamaruzaman, 2013). Hence, the development of innovative tools can be used as a guide to improve school performances.

EZ PLATE was developed based on several survey findings, feedback and data analysis from program participants. The findings of the training needs analysis (TNA) found that there were a few participants who did not evaluate the program due to constraints such as a lack of proper knowledge, skills and time as well as not possessing appropriate tools for doing so. In addition, existing program evaluation reports contain aspects such as general reports, pictures, multiple evaluation forms with different functions, and separate evaluation reports feedback.

Therefore, to overcome those weaknesses, IAB has innovated a tool (template - EZ PLATE) based on the program evaluation model known as the Logic Model (W. F. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). The Logic Model is a visual way of illustrating the resources (input) required to implement a program, the activities and outputs of a program, and the desired program outcomes (Minnesota Department of Health, 2020). EZ PLATE will be used to assess the program based on five evaluation elements namely input, activity, output, outcome and impact. This template has been introduced to school leaders during IAB's program evaluation courses. Through this template, leaders' knowledge and skills on program evaluation, analysis and reporting can be further improved. EZ PLATE allows for a more positive attitude and readiness among leaders to evaluate programs. On that account, EZ PLATE will assist the management (i.e., school leaders and coordinators) to determine a far more accurate and thorough decision concerning the evaluated program.

2. METHOD & MATERIAL

EZ PLATE is a template that has been created as a strategy to build self-confidence and reduce apprehension among school leaders in conducting program evaluations in schools. The foundation of the template is based on the belief of Tripodi (1987), in the Encyclopedia of Social Work, noted that *"the mission of program evaluation in social work is to provide information that can be used to improve social programs"*. In other words, it is necessary to *"evaluate established programs because there are always alternative and sometimes better ways to solve problems, especially in this era of high pressure, high stake of uncertainty in business, educational and individual endeavor"* (Victor, 2009).

EZ PLATE is created to promote program evaluation practice in schools, especially among those who are directly involved in the implementation of the program. In the initial stages, the program coordinators may take up the role as an evaluator to assess the program's effectiveness in achieving its intended objectives. Thus, this template will further promote direct involvement of the school leaders, program coordinators and participants in evaluating the effectiveness of the program. Based on Figure 1, the template will be filled after the school programs' evaluation took place. Leaders can evaluate their entire program, one or two program components, or even one or two services or activities within a component (OFRE, 2018). The first part of the template describes the program being evaluated (no.1 till no.5). The second part shows the evaluation objectives. It does not refer to the program objectives (no.6). The objectives embrace the reason for evaluating the program, for example to identify the level of evaluation elements such as level of program input, activities, output, outcome and impacts of the program on its effectiveness and in meeting program objectives. Other objectives include identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the program and ways to overcome them.

The next part refers to the analysis of data such as the percentage of each evaluation element, the mean scores and its interpretation. Findings must be described narratively and graphically (no.7 till no.9). Reports writing will be based on the findings and the fulfillment of evaluation objectives stated in no. 6. It might include the level of each of the evaluation elements, the strengths and weaknesses plus the ways to counter the weaknesses. Suggestions to improve the program must also

be stated clearly (no. 10). Then, the program coordinator will deliver this template to the school leaders to decide whether to continue, terminate or improve upon the program (no.11). Those who prepare this template will then add the URL link consisting of all his works and data evidence (no.12). Finally, he must acknowledge the report by signing the template and the school principals or headmasters will sign for approval (no.13 and no.14).

EZ PLATE TEMPLAT PENILAIAN PROGRAM			
1. Jabatan:			
2. Bidang:	3. Sasaran:	4. Tarikh Program:	
5. Nama Program:			
6. Objektif Penilaian:			
7. ANALISIS DATA & PELAPORAN (sila masukkan nilai peratus dan skor min setiap elemen dalam ruangan di bawah)			
Elemen Penilaian	SKOR MIN	PERATUS	TAHAP
INPUT			
AKTIVITI			
OUTPUT			
OUTCOME			
IMPAK			
KESELURUHAN			
8. Dapatan:		9. Graf:	
10. Laporan: (merujuk kepada pencapaian objektif penilaian)		11. Syor Cadangan (sila / pada ruang):	
		Program diteruskan _____	
		Program digugurkan _____	
		Program ditambah baik _____	
12. ** Sila letak pautan url Rekod Jejak Kerja _____			
13. Pengesahan: Pelapor		14. Pentadbir	
Tanda tangan:		Tanda tangan:	
Tarikh:		Tarikh:	

Figure 1. EZ PLATE (Program Evaluation Template)

3. FINDINGS

EZ PLATE was implemented during the last six months among program coordinators in IAB Genting Highlands and participants from Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah (PPD) Raub and PPD Jerantut to complement a program evaluation course. EZ PLATE was also utilized in the training of headmasters from the aforementioned districts. Participants were then interviewed and surveyed to explore their perceptions regarding the usage of EZ PLATE. The majority of respondents (more than 94%) agreed on the benefits of EZ PLATE as an effective and convenient program evaluation tool (Table 1).

Table 1: Feedback Data on the Benefits of EZ PLATE

No. Item	Percentage
1 EZ PLATE can be used as a simple program evaluation tool	94
2 EZ PLATE can help management make decisions	94
3 Program evaluation data is easily controlled using EZ PLATE	94
4 Integrated data of EZ PLATE can be accessed quickly	94
5 Internal customers (top management, audit, heads of departments and units) can use EZ PLATE data comprehensively	94
6 EZ PLATE can save coordinators' time in tracking the program reports	97
7 EZ PLATE can save users' time in tracking the program reports	97
8 EZ PLATE can save storage space for program report records	97
9 Human resources in making program evaluation reports can be reduced	97
10 EZ PLATE can increase the number (output) of program reports	97
11 EZ PLATE can be used as an efficient management tool	97
12 The development of EZ PLATE template is free	97
13 EZ PLATE contains a variety of complete data for improvement purposes	97
14 EZ PLATE template filling is easy	97
15 The management can make corrective treatment (action) immediately	97
16 EZ PLATE can save the cost of using paper and printing*	100
17 EZ PLATE can save paper usage in making program reports*	100
18 Program reports using EZ PLATE are easy to generate*	100
19 The management can effectively monitor program report data*	100

All respondents concurred that EZ PLATE can greatly reduce the usage of paper (paperless) and printing costs as it is operated on an online basis. Furthermore, evaluation reports are easy to generate and the management leaders can monitor data effectively. Thus, EZ PLATE helped provide not only descriptions of the programs but also data and reports of the evaluation that can be easily downloaded. The responses were strongly positive as most respondents were able to carry out the evaluations and prepare evaluation reports with ease and confidence.

4. DISCUSSION

EZ PLATE is a complete, comprehensive yet simple program evaluation template. The uniqueness of this template is that program evaluation can simply be carried out as an effective management, evaluation and decision-making tool simultaneously. The important aspect of the template is that it allows leaders to make quick and accurate decisions based on empirical data. Over time, even leaders or program coordinators who are rather hesitant with numbers and data are able to evaluate their program in a more systematic and focused manner.

In addition, EZ PLATE is a novel way to promote management skills, namely program evaluation skills, as the leaders can improve, revise and modify future implementation of the program based on the data obtained. The main focus of the template is to report evaluation findings

in descriptive and graphical form. Leaders can make suggestions on the continuation of the program based on the findings and reports. Besides, all documentations related to EZ PLATE are stored in the cloud (i.e., Google Drive) as a track record of the coordinator's work. Its paperless nature is helpful during pandemic situations where all information can be accessed anytime and without costs. This track record can be benchmarked and replicated by other parties for evaluation processes in their contexts. This can be done because the analysis of the evaluation data is based on the Logic Model as a constant variable (W.F. Kellogg Foundation, 2004).

EZ PLATE also supports the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013 - 2025) aimed to produce higher quality schools and higher performing school leaders through continuous practice of program evaluation (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2013). It is designed to equip Malaysian students holistically and to ensure students can fulfill their full potential by actively engaging in the educational programs held in their schools.

5. CONCLUSION

“What gets rightly measured, gets accordingly improved”. To reflect on whether the intended objectives of a school program are adequately achieved or vice versa, it is imperative for school leaders to be competent in their program evaluation skills. EZ PLATE presents a methodical yet simple tool for school leaders to be better equipped in their role of managing and analyzing the effectiveness of said program. Its detail-oriented, data-driven, easy-access and cost-friendly nature serves in allowing critical program appraisal and improvement to be made. For these reasons, it is evident that EZ PLATE rightly complements the Malaysian Education Blueprint's aspirations to maximize students' success for every Ringgit invested in the program (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013).

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