Innovative technologies in evaluation: new methods for a changing world

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Presentation Outline

1. Problem Definition
2. Evaluation Approach
3. Description of Case Studies
4. What Worked Well?
5. What Didn't Work?
6. Advantages and Disadvantages
7. Implications
8. Feedback and questions

Outline the problem

* Involving disengaged and vulnerable populations in evaluation can be challenging.

* These populations are often those that need to be involved, in order to generate useful findings and recommendations.

* Unique, context-bound challenges.

* Applying a social justice lens to evaluation of marginalised populations (Mertens, 2010)

Role of Technology

* Maximises stakeholder engagement and participation throughout the evaluation

* Reduces evaluation burden on participants

* Assists effective communication across a diverse group of stakeholders

Technology & Youth

* An ever growing array of e-Technologies has changed the way young people learn, work, and interact with others

* Young people are very familiar with these technologies, and they provide a unique opportunity to engage traditionally hard to reach groups

* BUT… they require careful development to ensure accessibility (Hattie, xxxx)

Evaluation approach

* Evaluation framework*****
  * Participatory
  * Collaborative
  * Innovative
  * Ethical
  * Rigorous
  * Based on continuous feedback

* Mixed methodology

* Triangulation, stakeholder input, conclusions and recommendations

*adapted from http://www.cdc.gov/eval/framework/index.htm
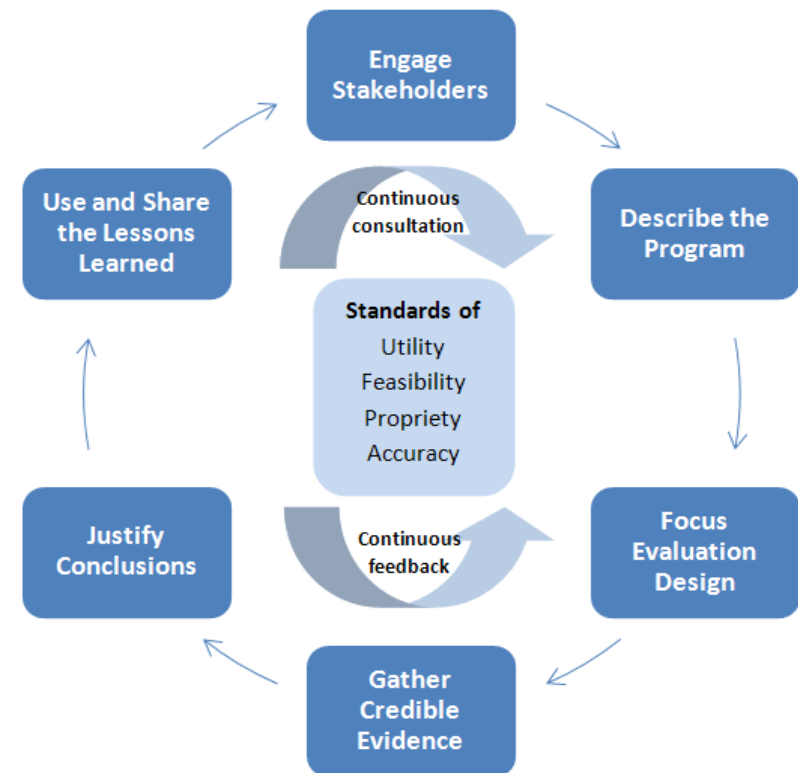
Case study 1 description: The Notschool Program
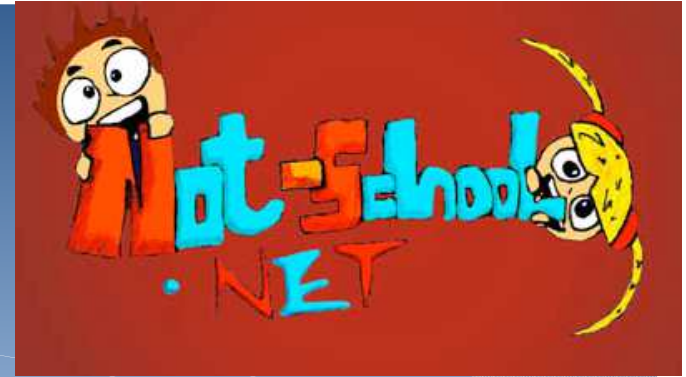
* Alternative online education program to re-engage disengaged students in learning.

Population
* Disengaged secondary school students
- chronic school refusers
- teenage parents
- youth suffering from mental illness and other social and behavioural issues

Program
* Running across three states: SA, TAS and VIC
- Different contexts
- Different program models often based on different DoE requirements and policies
- Different funding models

Evaluation Methods:
The Notschool Program

✳ Data Sources:

➢ **Literature Review**

➢ **VLE**: Virtual Learning Environment documents (eg: reports, examples of work)

➢ **Online Survey**: Retrospective design

➢ **COMPASS**: Online literacy and numeracy test

➢ **Interviews** with program stakeholders

Virtual Learning Environment
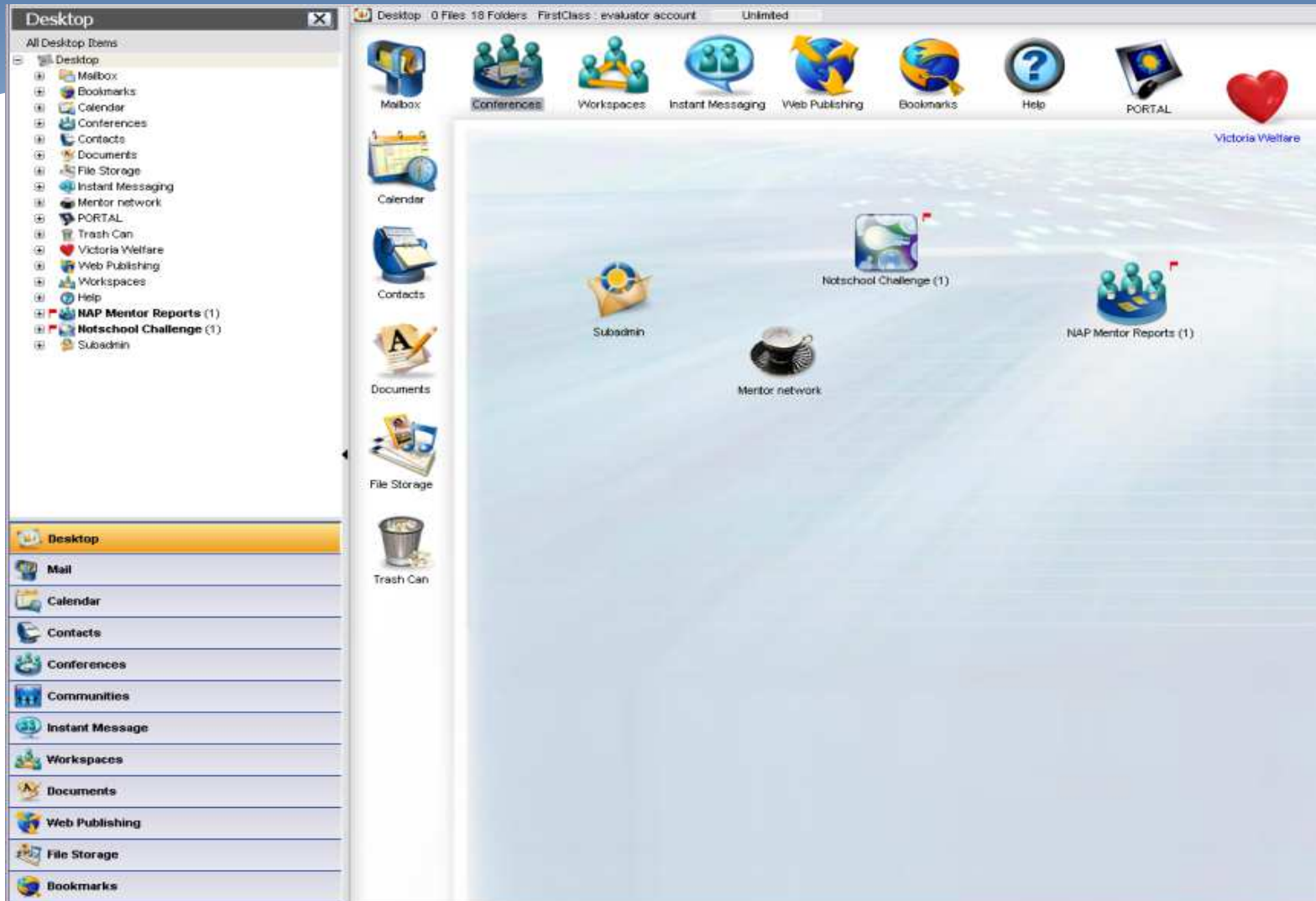
Case study 2 description: Real-time captioning program

* Population
  * Deaf/hard of hearing students, their teachers, and their parents in Years 9 - 12 across 8 metropolitan areas and regional facilities.
* Program
  * Real-time Captioning pilot programs within selected Victorian Government school classrooms
  * Three waves, running across different school settings and timeframes
  * Teacher's speech remotely revoiced and translated into text using speech recognition technology
  * Captions appear on student's laptop with a 3-5 second delay
  * Transcript available for student to review after class

Evaluation focus and methods

* Process and Immediate impact

* Evaluation aims

* Methods
    * literature review
    * online student survey
    * online teacher survey
    * Computer-assisted telephone survey with parents
    * school data audit using templates
    * language and literacy assessments - Compass
    * interviews with program staff
    * transcript analysis.

What worked well?

* Appropriate assessment tools
* Incentives
* Innovative methods
* Making use of existing infrastructure
* Reference group
* Evaluation workshops for buy-in
* Embracing the philosophy of the intervention
* Visual, personalised questions

What worked well?

Josh is 14. He is deaf and wears hearing aids. He's really keen to do well at school and his favourite subject is history. He enjoys reading but doesn't feel confident writing up his work. In the past he went in to a mainstream class for quite a lot of subjects but found it hard. This was because it was difficult to follow the discussion in the classroom. So, he often felt left out. Sometimes he just day-dreamed to pass the time away. Last month the school provided him with real-time captioning. Now he feels that he can keep up with the other kids and what they're talking about.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Choose the answer that best matches the way you feel.

	Before the captioning...				After the captioning...				
	Really disagree	Disagree	Agree	Really agree	Really disagree	Disagree	Agree	Really agree	No answer
I enjoy reading...	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	◉
I feel confident writing up my work...	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	◉
I find it hard being in a mainstream classroom...	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	◉
I find it difficult to keep up with discussions that happen in the classroom...	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	◉
I feel left out in the classroom...	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	◉

What didn't work so well?

Accessibility

Reflections

Positives	Negatives
Relatively cost-effective (most methods)	Passive decline/refusal
Can be more accommodating than traditional, face-to-face methods	Problems with accessibility
May increase coverage/representativeness, and thus lends credibility	Must match the method to stakeholder (e.g., computer literacy)
Reduces evaluand burden (part. important for over-researched groups)	Less evaluator control
Potential for tailoring/branching	Must secure buy-in of gate-keepers

Implications for evaluation practice

* Securing buy-in from gatekeepers

* Combining methods

* Streamlining consent

* Multiple and explicit accessibility analyses

* Cooperation with evaluation commissioners

Questions ??

* We would like to hear your experiences in using technology to engage vulnerable or underserved populations in evaluation.

Thank You

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