ALTE 615 Introduction to Theory and Practice

Nathaniel Hostley

Program Evaluation

Mr. Chulapol Thanomsing

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Program evaluation is the use of social research procedures to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programs as robust arena of activity directed at collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and communicating information about the effectiveness of social programs that whether can support the purpose of improving social conditions or not. Evaluations are conducted for a variety of practical reasons: to aid in decisions concerning whether programs should be continued, improved, expanded, or curtailed; to assess the utility of new programs and initiatives; to increase the effectiveness of program management and administration; and to satisfy the accountability requirements of program sponsors.

Along with history of evaluation, its roots extend to 17th century; systematic evaluation is relatively modern development. Modern evaluation grew from pioneering efforts in the 1930s and burgeoned in the postwar years as new methodologies were developed that could be applied to the rapidly growing social program arena.

According to the boom period in evaluation research, following World War II, numerous major programs were launched to meet needs for urban development and housing, technological and *cultural education*, occupational training, and preventive health activities. It was also during this time that major commitments were made to international programs for family planning, health and nutrition, and rural development. Expenditures were very large and consequently were accompanied by demands for "knowledge of results." [3]

Evaluation must be tailored to the political and organizational context of the program to be evaluated. It typically involves assessment of one or more of five program domains that are:

1. the need for the program,
2. the design of the program,
3. the program implementation and service delivery,
4. the program impact or outcomes, and
5. the program efficiency.

Therefore, they must be related to programs evaluation. At various times, policymakers, funding organizations, planners, program managers, taxpayers, or program clientele need to distinguish worthwhile programs from ineffective ones and launch new programs or revise existing ones so as to achieve certain desirable results. To do the program evaluation, answers to questions such as those below are necessary for many specialized programs, such as job training in a small town, a new mathematics curriculum for elementary schools, or the outpatient services of a community mental health clinic, as well as for broad national or state programs such as health care, family preservation, educational reform, or alternative education. To do so, answers to questions must be obtained such as following: [3]

- What is it about the problem or its effects that justifies ness expanded, or modified social programs?
- What feasible interventions are likely to significantly ameliorate the problem?
- What are the appropriate target populations for intervention?
- What are the nature and scope of the problem?
- Where is it located, whom does it affect, and how does it affect them?
- How much does the program cost?
- Are the intended services being provided?
- Is a particular intervention reaching its tar get population?
- Is the intervention being implemented well?

- Is the intervention effective in attaining the desired goals or benefits?
- Is the program cost reasonable in relation to its effectiveness and benefits?

Chapter 2
Tailoring Evaluation

Why Conduct Program Evaluation?

Evaluations serve many purposes. Before evaluating a program, it is critical to consider who is most likely to need and use the information that will be obtained and for what purposes. Listed below are some of the most common reasons to conduct evaluations.

1. *Evaluation for Program Management* monitors the routines of program operations. It can provide program staff or administrators with information on such items as participant characteristics, program activities, allocation of staff resources, or program costs. Assessing information of this type can help program staff to made short-term corrections.

2. *Evaluation for Staying on Track* can help to ensure that program activities continue to reflect program plans and goals for staying on track. This type of evaluation can help to strengthen service delivery and to maintain the connection between program goals, objectives, and services.

3. *Evaluation for Program Efficiency* can help to streamline service delivery or to enhance coordination among various program components, lowering the cost of service. Evaluation for pro gram efficiency might focus on identifying the areas in which a program is most successful in order to capitalize upon them.

4. *Evaluation for Program Accountability* is a process or and out come evaluation, the methods used in accountability evaluation must be scientifically defensible, and able to stand up to greater scrutiny than methods used in evaluations that are intended primarily for in house use.

5. *Evaluation for New Program Development* needs to conduct methodical evaluations of their efforts before making claims to potential users.

The evaluations are much more value for progressive program. But they also carry risks and use scarce resources, and because staff may be unsure how to conduct them, evaluations are often a low priority for programs. It is possible to avoid some of those risks or to minimize their effects. I would like to show some of those risks following:

1. Evaluations can create anxiety among program staff.
2. Staffs may believe that tools of evaluation are ill-suited to measure the positive changes they see occurring.
3. Evaluations can interfere with program activities.
4. Evaluations compete with service for scarce resources.
5. Evaluations results may be misused.

What Should Be Evaluated?

Obviously, the goal of all education, administrators as well as instructors, is to offer the highest quality program possible given the resources available. For program personnel to make maximum use of their opportunities, they must make sound decisions regarding available alternatives. The following statements may help to clarify the relationship between planning, decision making, and evaluation. [3]

1. The quality of programs depends upon the quality of decisions in and about the program.
2. The quality of decisions depends upon the abilities to identify the alternatives which comprise decision situations and to make sound judgment of these alternatives.
3. Making sound judgments requires timely access to valid and reliable information pertaining to the alternatives.
4. The availability of such information can be enhanced through a systematic means to provide it.
5. The processes necessary for providing the information for decision making collectively comprise the concept of evaluation.

The types of decision situations in education or training may be classified as: 1) planning decisions are those which focus on needed improvements by specifying the domain, major goals, and specific objectives to be served, 2) programming decisions specify procedures, personnel, facilities, resources, and time requirements for implementing the planned program, 3) implementing decisions include those which direct programmed activities, and 4) recycling decisions include those necessary for terminating, sustaining, adjusting, or drastically modifying the educational program.

Who Should Be Involved In Evaluation?

It is important to involve a number of program and non-program personnel in the task. Evaluation within a public or private education should represent a concerted effort on the part of the entire staff. As a rule, all individuals who share and interest in a course, program, or total program should be involved, and their degree of involvement is probably the greatest factor contributing to the commitment to implement changes deemed necessary by the evaluation.

- *Administrative or Management Personnel* should be involved in all types and levels of evaluation, even if they have not initiated the activity themselves.
- *Instructional Personnel* should also be involved in evaluation, judging their own endeavors as well as those of others.
- *Learners* are also able to make important contributions to assessment of counseling and other student services.
- *Ancillary Personnel* can contribute primary or secondary opinions concerning program effectiveness and provide the base of consultative team evaluation. Ancillary personnel may have input in unexpected areas.
- *Other Members and Citizens* can provide additional aid in the conduct and implementation of evaluation systems.

- *External Experts* comprise the backbone of many consultative team evaluations.

Evaluation Methods and Questions

A program evaluation is essentially an information-gathering and -interpreting endeavor that attempts to answer a specified set of questions about a program's performance and effectiveness. An important step in designing an evaluation, therefore, is determining the questions the evaluation must answer. This is sometimes done in a very perfunctory manner, but we advocate that it be given studious and detailed attention. A carefully constructed set of evaluation questions gives structure to the evaluation, leads to appropriate and thoughtful planning, and serves as a basis for informative discussions about who is interested in the answers and how they will be used. Indeed, constructing such questions and planning how to answer them is the primary way in which an evaluation is tailored to the unique circumstances associated with each program that comes under scrutiny. [1]

Evaluators have developed relatively distinct conceptual frameworks and associated methods to address each type of evaluation question. Evaluators use these schemes to organize their thinking about how to approach different program evaluation situations. For planning purposes, an evaluator will typically select the general evaluation approach that corresponds to the types of questions to be answered in an evaluation, then tailor the particulars to the specifics of the questions and the program situation. So, the relations between the method and question, I will show following:

Methods	Questions
Needs Evaluation	Questions about the need for program services
Evaluation of Program Theories	Questions about program conceptualization or design
Evaluation of Program Process	Questions about program operations and service delivery
Impact Evaluation	Questions about program outcomes
Efficiency Evaluation	Questions about program cost and efficiency

I can summarize the evaluation method that is the performance judging of learner. So, there are two main type of evaluation method. According to The Learning Management Corporation, the two types are formative evaluation and summative evaluation.

- *A formative evaluation* is a test that is given to provide feedback during a course. Based on the results of a formative assessment, learners discover where they are having difficulties and are motivated to remedy them, and instructors can adjust the course depending on the needs of the learners. Formative assessments usually take the form of pre-tests, short quizzes, module tests, and other evaluations that are limited in scope.

- *A summative evaluation* is a test that is given to determine how much learning has occurred over a period of time. Based on the results of a summative assessment, a learner may or may not be able to continue with the next part of his/her course of study, and instructors can evaluate the overall structure and balance of the course. Summative assessments usually take the form of mid-term and final exams.

Chapter 3
Evaluation System Design

Step in Planning Evaluations

Assuming that the benefits, risks, and costs have been considered and that the decision proceeds has been reached, there are practical step in designing evaluations.

1. **Identifying the Evaluation's User** – Depending on the programs and setting, users may range gram parents and the school board to other institutions. This will help to determine what questions are most important, what data will be viewed as credible, what analyses should be conducted, and how results should be transmitted and displayed.

2. **Choosing the Important Evaluation Questions** – A way must be found to establish priorities and to limit the number of questions. The most desirable method is to agree on a limited number of evaluation questions when the program goals and objectives are first established, but often the evaluation questions are drawn up after the fact of the program has multiple goals.

3. **Mapping Out an Evaluation Work Plan** – The plan should the outline the data that will be collected and how the information gathered will relate to each evaluation question. It is critical to create a step-by-step work plan for conduction the evaluation.

4. **Making Sure Adequate Resources are at Hand to Carry Out All Functions** – Data collection and coding may be performed by program staff or sometimes students, but data analysis may require specialized skills and training. This is another activity for which program staff might wish to consult and outside expert.

5. **Addressing Practical Problem in Planning and Implementing Evaluations** – Evaluators should be interested in discussing those problems that may be occurred during or before and after the evaluation process.

6. **Obtaining Technical Assistance From Outside** – Staff of other programs who have conducted evaluations or groups established to provide technical assistance on specific elements of assessment.

What Techniques Should Be Used In Evaluation?

The lack of specific techniques for collecting and utilizing evaluative information in public educational and private training organizations has been a primary weakness of most theoretical evaluation models. There are several techniques which can and should be combined to build a system of evaluation. These techniques include learner evaluation, external expert team evaluation, and cost and outcome evaluation.

1. **Learner Evaluation** – This is the measurement of learner performance that is probably the most widely used evaluative technique and can form the base for a total program evaluation. A comparison of this profile to desired program or course outcomes will indicate areas which need improvement. Moreover, this technique is included with the follow-up evaluation. A follow-up evaluation involves contacting individuals sub sequent to their participation in an educational program. This contact, usually by way of a mail questionnaire, can provide placement information as well as other information relating to the post-program activities of the graduate or dropout. In addition, the staff evaluation may be conducted concurrently with the follow-up and learner evaluation at another time. It is evident that the information obtained for the same body of learners through the utilization of student measurement, student follow-up, and the staff evaluation can be integrated.

2. **External Expert Team Evaluation** - A team of external experts, internal personnel, community business and industrial personnel, and other types of individuals can be invited to review the organization, objectives, evaluative procedures, content, personnel, and other program and course components. In addition, the external expert team

can make recommendations for bringing the program or course closer to meeting the combined needs of learners in the business and industrial community.

3. **Cost and Outcome Evaluation** - A cost-related evaluation can also provide evaluative information which can be combined with that gathered through one or more of the foregoing techniques. Cost studies must attempt to correlate costs to outcomes, facilitating program decision making. Two courses having similar goals but different costs must be examined to determine the worth of the additional expenditure for one course over the other.

Preparing an Evaluation Report

A prepared evaluation report will facilitate the communication of evaluation procedures which were undertaken and will more clearly portray the results of the evaluation activities. An evaluation report is the servant of an institution and serves in many different capacities; consequently, the format will vary from institution to institution. However, most institutions should be able to organize activities around the categories of objectives, program description, description of evaluation, and evaluation outcomes, since these are all components of any good evaluation system. It is necessary that a report be prepared and presented in written form to those who may be concerned about the focus of the evaluation and those who may be involved in the program itself. In the following paragraph, it will show the format for a formal evaluation report. [3]

I. Evaluation Objectives
   a. Evaluation purposes or goals
   b. Audiences of report

II. Program Description
   a. Program goals
   b. Student performance objectives
   c. Description of students
   d. Description of program staff
   e. Description of instructional methods utilized

III. Description of Evaluation Methodology
   a. Scope of evaluation
   b. Time frame of evaluation
   c. Description of activities utilized
   d. Biasing factors

IV. Evaluation Outcomes or Results
   a. Results by activity
   b. Results by issue

V. Evaluation Conclusions
   a. Predetermined decision situations
   b. Exploratory evaluation

Drawing Evaluation Conclusion

Before they draw a conclusion, the staff should review and discuss all information which is relevant to the particular topic. Conclusion drawn from evaluation results may relate to pre determined or exploratory decision situations depending upon the purpose for which the evaluation activities were conducted. A meeting should then be scheduled at which the staff will discuss the results and complete section five of the report, the evaluative conclusions. This meeting can be structured by the group leader to fit its normal functioning procedures or it may be organized around the following suggested steps.

1. **General Discussion** - Start the staff conference with a general overview of the task to be faced and field any questions regarding the procedures.

2. **State a Conclusion** - Ask each group member to draw one positive conclusion based upon the results. As each person in the group presents a conclusion, have that person or a stenographer record the conclusion.

3. **Review Initial Conclusion** – The group leader review each of the conclusions that were developed in step two and give his reactions to the conclusion.

4. **Team Development of Conclusions** – The size of team may influence the comprehensive of conclusions.

5. **Edit Conclusions** – The leader should review all conclusions and reword those that are in need of correction.

6. **Staff Review of Written Conclusions** – These should be duplicated and given to staff for their consideration.

7. **Print and Disseminate Report** – The report should be duplicated and disseminated to the appropriate audience.

Reference

[1] Rossi, Peter H., Freeman, Howard E., and Lipsey, Mark W. <u>Evaluation Sixth Edition.</u> London: SAGE Publications, 1999.

[2] Weiss, Carol H. <u>Evaluation Second Edition.</u> New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1998.

[3] Wentling, Tim L. <u>Evaluating Occupational Education and Training Programs.</u> Massachusetts: Allym and Bacon, Inc., 1980.

[4] "Four Step Model of Evaluation." <u>Virginia University</u> Online. Internet. 8 Dec. 2002.

[5] "Planning Learner Assessment." <u>The Learning Management Corporation</u> Online. Internet. 8 Dec. 2002.