Evaluation and ADVANCE: Some Things to Consider

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Evaluation Basics: Soup, Cooks, Guests & Improvement

When cooks taste the soup, it’s **formative evaluation**; the collection of information that can be used to improve the soup. If necessary, the cook’s next step is to explore strategies to fix the problem. The cook makes some changes and then re-tastes the soup, collecting more formative evaluation data.

When the guests taste the soup at the table, they’re doing **summative evaluation**. They are collecting information to make a judgment about the overall quality and value of soup. Once the soup is on the table and in the guests’ mouths, there is little that can be done to improve that soup.

Thanks to Bob Stake for first introducing this metaphor.
Compared to What? Evaluation Designs

- Experimental designs
- Quasi-experimental designs
- Mixed methods designs
- Case studies

NSF does not promote one design, rather it wants the design that will do the best job answering your evaluation questions!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Type</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Representation</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Case Study</td>
<td>One-shot Post-test only Design</td>
<td>X O</td>
<td>Takes fewer resources</td>
<td>Doesn’t look at change</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Can present a “snapshot” of a point in time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quasi-experimental Study</td>
<td>One-shot Pre-test Post-test Design</td>
<td>O_a X O_b</td>
<td>Looks at change over time</td>
<td>Other things besides treatment could be causing change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quasi-experimental Study</td>
<td>Post-test Only Intact Group Design</td>
<td>X O O</td>
<td>Compares to another group</td>
<td>Doesn’t control for any initial differences in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Type</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnography</td>
<td>Participant observer examination of group behaviors and patterns</td>
<td>Explores complex effects over time</td>
<td>Resource intensive&lt;br&gt;Story telling approach may limit audience&lt;br&gt;Potential observer bias</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>Exploration of a case (or multiple cases) over time</td>
<td>Provides an in-depth view&lt;br&gt;Elaborates on quantitative data</td>
<td>Limited generalizability</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td>Systematic identification of properties of large amounts of textual information</td>
<td>Looks directly at communication&lt;br&gt;Allows for quantitative and qualitative analysis</td>
<td>Tends too often to simply consist of word counts&lt;br&gt;Can disregard the context that produced the text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Methods Study</td>
<td>Use of more than one of the above designs</td>
<td>Can counteract the disadvantages of any one design</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenging Assumptions

When I was a physicist people would often come and ask me to check their numbers, which were almost always right. They never came and asked me to check their assumptions, which were almost never right.

Eli Goldratt
Pat’s Evaluation Assumptions

- “Black hole” evaluations are bad.
- If you aren’t going to use the data, don’t ask for it.
- A bad measure of the right thing is better than a good measure of the wrong thing.
- Acknowledging WIIFM increases response rates.
- Outcome variables that have a chance to reflect change are best.
Some Web-based Sources of Resources

OERL, the Online Evaluation Resource Library.
http://oerl.sri.com/home.html

User Friendly Guide to Program Evaluation

AGEP Collecting, Analyzing and Displaying Data

American Evaluation Association
http://www.eval.org/resources.asp

Demystifying Outcomes
Includes NSF project evaluation plans, instruments, reports and professional development modules on:

- Designing an Evaluation
- Developing Written Questionnaires
- Developing Interviews
- Developing Observation Instruments
- Data Collection
- Instrument Triangulation and Adaptation.
Introduction

Section I - Evaluation and Types of Evaluation

Section II - The Steps in Doing an Evaluation

Section III - An Overview of Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection Methods

Section IV - Strategies That Address Culturally Responsive Evaluations

Other Recommending Reading, Glossary, and Appendix A: Finding An Evaluator
I. Make Your Message Clear
II. Use Pictures, Where Appropriate
III. Use Statistics and Stories
IV. Be Responsive to Your Audience.
V. Make Comparisons
VI. Find Ways To Deal With Volatile Data
VII. Use the Results
Some Questions to Consider

1. What evaluation resources do you have you would like to share? What evaluation resources would you like to have from others?

2. What can you (and we) do to make your evaluation results known to and useful to: your project? other projects? ADVANCE? the broader world?

3. Why do you think your strategies will lead to your desired outcomes? Use research, theory or just plain logic.