

Chapter 12

Evaluation Research

- Evaluation of social interventions
- Very old tradition of research
- Institute a social reform for a specific purpose, paid attention to the results

Definition

- Evaluation research = research purpose, not a specific research method.
- This purpose is to evaluate the impact of social interventions.

Growth

- 1.) increase in federal requirements
institute a program, prove its effective
- 2.) the availability of research funds to fulfill those requirements.

Topics Appropriate for Evaluation Research

- Needs assessment studies – Studies that aim to determine the existence and extent of problems, typically among a segment of the population.
- Cost/Benefits Studies
- Monitoring Studies
- Appropriate topics are those with practical significance.

Examples of Evaluation Research

- Emergency room procedures – effective?
- Driver training classes – effective?
- Drug and alcohol prevention programs – effective?
- Scared Straight Program – effective?

Formulating the Problem: The Issue of Measurement

- Program evaluation or outcome assessment: the determination of whether a social intervention is producing the intended result.
- How will you actually measure that the intervention produced the result you wanted?

- Grants Before:
 - Describe how the organization measures impact.
- Grants Now:
 - How will success be defined and how will you quantify it?
 - What are your outcome measures?

- How do we operationalize success or failure?
- What particular variables should we identify?
- Must identify the specific outcome(s) that is the indicator(s) of success.
- How should we measure those outcomes?

Measurement & Methods

- Can evaluate with qualitative indicators, not just quantitative ones.
- Evaluation research uses many methods.

Use of Research Results

- Can be a powerful tool for social change.
- This is research in the context of people's lives.
- It is very political.

Use of Research Results

– Why evaluation research results are not always put into practice:

- Implications may not be presented in a way that is understandable to the non-researcher.
- Results may contradict deeply held beliefs.
- Researchers may have a vested interest in the results.

Ethics of Evaluation Research

- Evaluation research is often controversial.
- Involves logistical problems because it is:
 - Interwoven into real life issues.