

Evaluating Your Induction & Mentoring Program

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Why do evaluation?

- In field of education, systematic evaluation became prevalent with the federal government's spending money in the 1960's poverty programs (Title I).
- Since then, program evaluation has become an expected part of accepting grant funds from state or federal government or foundations.

Kinds of Evaluation

- Formative Assessment
- Summative Assessment

- Applied vs. “pure” research
- Theories of Evaluation determine the approach to the problem
 - Three examples: Patton, Stake, Eisner

Michael Quinn Patton

- Theory of “Practical evaluation”
- In a 2007 interview, he said:

Our very processes of taking in information distort reality — all the evidence of social science indicates this. We have selective perception — some of us have rose-coloured glasses, some of us are gloom-and-doomers. We are not neutral; there is an emotional content to information. We need disciplined techniques to be able to stand back from that day-to-day world and really be able to see what is going on. We need approaches to help us stand back from our tendency to have biases, prejudices, and preconceptions.

http://www.evaluationwiki.org/index.php/Michael_Quinn_Patton

Robert Stake

- University of Illinois
- Theory of “Responsive evaluation”
- Evaluation should be useful to the people who are doing the work!

Elliott Eisner

- Theory of Evaluation related to arts-based programs
- Developed the idea of **connoisseurship**
 - I know good teaching when I see it!
 - Experts in the field can recognize and describe elements of artistic and effective work in education settings, as in art and music settings.

Evaluation for internal purposes

- Formative assessment
- Purpose is to understand and improve.
- Identify problems and challenges
- Celebrate successes
- Possibly reveal hidden patterns – positive or negative
- Explore work in progress
- Make mid-course corrections

Evaluation for External Purposes

- Summative assessment
- Purpose is to show impact or progress.
- Justify resources spent on project
- Help decision making
- Direct future efforts
- Accumulate evidence
- Define reasonable expectations

Outside evaluator vs. self-assessment

- Self-assessment is useful. Insiders know the program well.
- Outside evaluator has to learn “who’s on first.”
- Outside evaluators can bring objectivity.
- They may have other benchmarks for comparison.
- They are more persuasive to other outsiders (e.g., funders).

Measuring Impact

- How can we measure impact?
 - Set up goals or targets in advance.
 - Monitor progress toward meeting goals.
 - Identify objective or concrete measures.
 - Include process measures.

Thinking about Data

- What data should we collect?
- How should we organize it?
- How do we analyze it?

What data are being collected about induction & mentoring?

- State
- Other projects
- What is recommended by the research literature on mentoring & induction?

Evaluation as integral part of initial program design

- Good program design has evaluation built in from the start.
- Sometimes it is good to start with evaluation questions and work backward.
 - How can we show evidence of success?
 - What evidence is persuasive to us?
 - What evidence is persuasive to others?
 - E.g., legislators, ISBE

Context matters

- An experienced evaluator would not look for the same activities in a beginning project and a project that has been in existence for a couple of years.
- Where are you in the process?
- How cohesive is your group?
- How detailed and specific is your design/proposal?

Evaluation as story-telling

- What is the best way to “tell the story” of your project? Who is the best story-teller?
- What **artifacts** or **evidence** help your story be more persuasive and convincing?

Bias in Evaluation

- Problem of bias in self-report data
- Solution: triangulation
- Find evidence in more than one form or from more than one source.
- Charts and graphics can help break down a complex story and show multiple viewpoints.

Questions?

- Pose questions from your project and we will try to illustrate these concepts with your real examples.