Program/Policy Evaluation and Assessment

Applying Qualitative Evaluation Methods

Nhial T. Tutlam, PhD, MPH

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Qualitative Method

- “Not Every thing that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts” – Albert Einstein

Qualitative Evaluation Designs

- What is qualitative evaluation?
- How is it distinguished from other forms of program evaluation?
- How do qualitative evaluators do their work?

Appropriate Applications of Qualitative Evaluation

- ***Formative Evaluation Questions:***
  - How does a program actually work?
  - Has the program been implemented as planned?
  - What are the program objectives and target population?
  - Can the program be evaluated?
  - What program outcomes were observed?
  - Why do the observed program outcomes occur?
  - How can the program process be change?

Appropriate Applications of Qualitative Evaluation

- ***Summative Evaluation Questions:***
  - Is the program worthwhile given the outcome achieved?
  - Is the program offering value for the resources that it consumes?

Appropriate Applications of Qualitative Evaluation

- ***Formative Evaluation***
  - Process studies
  - Comparing Programs
  - Documenting development overtime and system changes
  - Implementation evaluation
  - Logic models and theories of action

Appropriate Applications of Qualitative Evaluation

- ***Summative Evaluation***
  - Evaluability assessment
  - Outcomes evaluation
  - Evaluating individualized outcomes
  - Prevention evaluation

Qualitative vs. Quantitative Evaluation

Qualitative Evaluation	Quantitative Evaluation
Inductive	Research hypothesis
Holistic approach	Finding patterns
Understanding subjective lived experience	Understanding how social reality confirms hypothesis
Uses natural language	Emphasis on measure-ment procedures

Qualitative vs. Quantitative Evaluation

Qualitative Evaluation	Quantitative Evaluation
In-depth, detailed data	Representative sample of stakeholders
Use case studies	Use sample size with statistical power
Evaluator is the primary measuring instrument	Reliable and validated measuring instruments
Naturalistic approach – no manipulation of setting	Evaluators control and can manipulate setting

Designing and Conducting Qualitative Program Evaluations

- ***Qualitative evaluation design and implementation issues:***

1. Clarifying the evaluation purpose
2. Identifying research design and comparison
3. Mixed-methods design
4. Identifying unit of analysis and appropriate sampling strategy
5. Data collection instruments
6. Collecting and coding qualitative data
7. Analyzing qualitative data

Clarifying Evaluation Purpose and Question

- What is the purpose of the evaluation?

- What question is the evaluation used for answering?
  - Formative vs. Summative evaluation questions

Identify Research Design and Comparisons

- Most commonly used qualitative design is the implicit design
  - Posttest with no control group

- Two broad types of comparisons
  - **Single cases** – conduct analysis on case-by-case basis
  - **Across cases** – compare within and across cases
    - Between group comparisons
    - Comparison across program sites

Mixed-Method Evaluation Designs

- Combine both qualitative and quantitative sources of data
  1. *Quantitizing*
  2. *Qualitizing*

- Categorized on the basis of four factors:
  1. Timing – data collected concurrently
  2. Weighting – prioritization of methods
  3. Mixing – bringing quantitative and qualitative together
  4. Theorizing – how theory can frame a project

Identifying Appropriate Sample In Qualitative Evaluations

- ***Stratified purposeful sampling***
  - Ensure cases from all important groups are included
  - Important for conducting comparative analysis
  - E.g. population is divided into segment- (SES, gender, race)

- ***Snowball sampling***
  - Depends on referrals
  - Good for identifying information-rich cases and reach hard-to-reach population
  - Stop when you reach saturation

Identifying Appropriate Sample In Qualitative Evaluations

- ***Theoretical Sampling***
  - To test theory and importance of emerging pattern
  - To test emerging concepts or theories
    - Used in grounded theory approaches that build generalization from case studies
  - Theoretical Saturation: the point where new data will not lead to new findings

Identifying Appropriate Sample In Qualitative Evaluations

- ***Criterion Sampling***
  - Sample subjects who meet certain criterion/criteria
- ***Unique Cases/Deviant Cases***
  - Select subjects who are extremely different (Case Study)
- ***Maximum Variation***
  - Get a wide range of variation on characteristics of interest

Identifying Appropriate Sample In Qualitative Evaluations

- ***Opportunistic sampling***
  - Takes advantage of inductive strategy
  - Involves making decisions about sampling during data collection
- ***Convenience sampling***
  - Those you can easily find
- ***Mixed sampling***
  - Combine purposeful strategies with random sampling

Data Collection Methods in Qualitative Evaluations

- Face-to-Face Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Content Analysis
- Observations

Face-to-Face Interview

- Conduct an interview individually
- Loss of anonymity
- Gaining entry into the community (trust building)
- Use of informants (parameter specification)
- Use of semi-structured interview schedule
- Record interviews

Face-to-Face (cont'd)

- Pretest instrument – helps determine if questions are misinterpreted/misunderstood
- Be confident and be relaxed – your demeanor will affect the entire interview
- Inform participants –informed consent
- Cautious flexibility – handling unexpected issues
- Listening and observing are key skills
- Ask for clarification

Face-to-Face (cont'd)

- Anonymity and confidentiality – explain
- Ask questions and raise issues in a conversational way
- Show you are interested but non-judgmental – sensitive issues
- Issues of social and cultural diversity
- Note taking – can be challenging while keeping the conversation moving
- Note key phrases
- Pay attention to the context- provides background

Focus Group

- Conduct interviews in a group setting
- It creates group dynamics
- One group consists of 5-8 people
- **Moderator facilitates conversation**
  - Very critical role
- Time varies between 30 minutes and 2 hours

Focus Group (continued)

- If the target population is heterogeneous, create subgroups
- Each subgroup should have 2-3 participants
- Risk of loss of confidentiality to other focus group participants
- Audio record

Content Analysis

- Analysis of textual materials, determining common themes, coding the themes, and in some cases, quantifying the coded information
  - Information obtained from variety of sources
  - Used in tandem with other methods
  - Useful in outcome evaluation
  - Useful in needs assessment
  - Helpful in triangulation

Observation

- Used when you want to understand attitude and behaviors in natural settings
  - e.g. Discriminatory behavior

- To study subtle cultural aspects within communities/organizations
  - e.g. eye contact, taking off shoes in the house

Observation (continued)

- When subjects cannot fill out questionnaires
  - e.g. Studying children
- To study processes and dynamics
  - e.g. Reorganization
- Phenomena which are not measurable but observable
  - e.g. Collective behavior (L.A. Riot)

Observation (continued)

- ***Cautions***
  - Observer effect
  - Personal bias in interpretation
  - Previous knowledge about the topic

Observation (continued)

- Stages and Aspects of Observation
  - ***Stages of observation:***
    - Descriptive stages (unfocused)
    - Focused stage (narrower range)
    - Selective stage (focus on emergent themes)

Observation (continued)

- Stages and Aspects of Observation
  - Focus on emergent (not planned) and contextual phenomena
  - Cultural study: norms and practices (e.g. greeting in different cultures)
  - Case study: event (e.g. transition to college)
  - Organizational study: roles, titles, cliques, etc. (interactions among professors)

Observation (continued)

- ***Roles of Observer***
  - Complete participant
  - Participant-as-observer
  - Observer-as-participant
  - Complete observer

Analysis of Qualitative Data

- It is important that the qualitative data are effectively analyzed "so that the qualitative findings are **clear**, **credible**, and **address the relevant and priority evaluation questions and issues**" – Patton (2003)

Analysis of Qualitative Data

- **Getting Started**
  - Recall why you conducted interviews and how the interviews fit into the program evaluation
  - What specific evaluation issues were you anticipating could be addressed by the interview data?
  - Does each section of your interview instrument address a particular issue?

Analysis of Qualitative Data

- **Steps**
  - Transcribe the data verbatim
  - Cleaning the data (do not correct grammar)
  - Read through the transcripts (while taking notes)
  - Mark meaningful quotations

Analysis of Qualitative Data

- **Coding**
  - The process of purposefully interpreting information
  - Assigning numbers (colors, underlines, marks, etc.) to segment
  - Based on important key words and phrases
  - Only relevant data is coed
  - Code is data-driven

Analysis of Qualitative Data

- ***Deductive Coding***
  - Create a list of codes before you start your analysis
  - Pre-set themes, categories or codes
    - These can help guide you how to categorize your data
    - You typically have prior knowledge when you use this method and have some idea of what you are going to find

Analysis of Qualitative Data

- ***Inductive Coding/Grounded Theory Method***
  - You allow the data to guide how you are going to code
  - Code emerges from the data

Analysis of Qualitative Data

- **Three types of coding**
  - *Open coding*: reading through each transcript while assigning numbers/codes
  - *Axial coding*: intense analysis around one category- relationship/connection among the codes
  - *Selective coding*: connecting several themes

Analysis of Qualitative Data

- **Coding Steps**
  - Read your data
  - Systematically mark similar words or concepts with the same code
  - Categorize the concepts
  - You can use different methods for coding:
    - Microsoft Word or Excel tables
    - Statistical Software: MAXQDA, ATLAS.ti, or NVivo

Analysis of Qualitative Data

- **Category (variable):** a group of segments which tap similar phenomenon or meaning
- **Core Category**: Category which is important and/or meaningful to the study
- **Theme**: Construct to be used for theory construction

Presentation of Results

- ***Descriptive***: Description of a phenomenon (Phenomenological approach)
- ***Interpretive***: Interpretation of 'other's' experience (Interpretive Phenomenology)
- ***Theoretical***: Explanation of a phenomenon (Grounded Theory Method)
- ***Descriptive, interpretive, and reflexive***: Describe one's experience in relations to others (Autoethnography)

Assessing the Credibility and Generalizability of Qualitative Findings

- How do you establish credibility and generalizability of data
  1. ***Triangulation***
     - Consistent findings
     - Ask questions of why in case of divergent findings
  2. ***Feedback from informants***
     - Get confirmation from people who know program best
     - Can help get buy-in from stakeholders

Connecting Qualitative Evaluation Methods to Performance Measurement

- Performance measurement tend to rely on quantitative data
- Numbers do not always capture outcomes
  - Recall the quote by Einstein
- Most Significant Change (MSC) Approach
  - Applies qualitative methods to monitoring and assessing performance

Discussion Questions

- Questions # 7 & 10 in the text book (page 221)