EDP 617: A Short Course on Evaluation Models

A Tiny Primer

Welcome

This is a relatively compact and short introduction to evaluation models.

The Basics

Name	Description	Asks
Behavioral Objectives Approach	the degree to which the objectives of a program, product, or process have been achieved.	*is the program, product, or process achieving its objectives?*
The Four-Level Model	four levels of training outcomes: reactions, learning, behavior, and results.	*what impact did the training have on participants in terms of their reactions, learning, behavior, and organizational results?*
Responsive Evaluation	evaluators need to be responsive to the information needs of various audiences or stakeholders.	*what does the program look like to different people?*
Goal-Free Evaluation	the actual outcomes rather than the intended outcomes of a program so the evaluator has minimal contact with the program managers and staff and is unaware of the program's stated goals and objectives.	*what are all the effects of the program, including any side effects?*

Middle of the Pack

Name	Description	Asks
Adversary/Judicial Approaches	adapt the legal paradigm to program evaluation by first arguing their cases based on the evidence (data) collected followed by a judge or a panel of judges decideing which side has made a better case and makes a ruling.	*what are the arguments for and against the program?*
Consumer Oriented Approaches	to help consumers choose among competing programs or products.	*would an educated consumer choose this program or product?*
Expertise/Accreditation Approaches	relies on expert opinion to determine the quality of programs to assess quality.	*how would professionals rate this program?*
Organizational Learning	a social activity in which evaluation issues are constructed by and acted on by organization members and is ongoing and integrated into all work practices.	*what are the information and learning needs of individuals, teams, and the organization in general?*
Success Case Method	the practicalities of defining successful outcomes and success cases and uses some of the processes from theory-driven evaluation to determine the linkages, which may take the form of a logic model, an impact model, or a results map.	*what is really happening?*

The Drivers

Name	Description	Asks
Theory Driven Evaluation	theoretical rather than methodological issues bydeveloping a plausible model of how the program is supposed to work.	*how is the program supposed to work? what are the assumptions underlying the program's development and implementation?*
Utilization Focused Evaluation	done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended uses and assumes that stakeholders will have a high degree of involvement in many, if not all, phases of the evaluation.	*What are the information needs of stakeholders, and how will they use the findings?*
Participatory Evaluation	engaging stakeholders in the evaluation process, so they may better understand evaluation and the program being evaluated and ultimately use the evaluation findings for decision-making purposes.	*what are the information needs of those closest to the program?*
Empowerment Evaluation	use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination.	*what are the information needs to foster improvement and self-determination?*

Which One to Use?

You don't have to formally declare a model. In fact, unless specific circumstances demand it, its better that you probably don't. Recently there has been a push to get away from a design oriented evaluation approach which is good for many reasons - for one you aren't pigeonholing yourself to a predetermined structure that

1. may not apply exactly resulting in skewed results, and

2. dilutes or suppresses creativity and thinking.

This allows you to deal with the program as is rather than viewing it through framework of a model. The bottom line is if we believe that *no two programs are alike, then why should we use a one size fit all approach to study it?*

So should you care? Yes because even though a prior framework is likely not the best tool to use, you'll use parts of multiple models here and there. So rather than treating these as musts, think of them as possible approaches that can be combined, expanded, ignored, etc. Like anything else, they can help but most evaluations should never rely on any one of them.

And That's It

Remember that models don't determine the course of an evaluation - you do! Use your best judgment, common sense, content knowledge, expertise, etc - the things that hopefully distinguish you both professionally and academically to administer a study. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.