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AUTHOR Armstrong, Anona F.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the reasons for resistance to evaluation and the factors that affect adoption of new procedures, while focusing on a model for guiding the planning of evaluation implementation strategies. The process of adoption of an innovation occurs in three stages: orientation, where the user identifies benefits; initiation, where the user gives an innovation a trial; and integration, where it becomes part of routine practice. At each stage in the adoption, different strategies can be directed to gain the cooperation of either the user of the evaluation or the organization: (1) power; (2) communication; (3) consultation; (4) reinforcement; (5) training ; and (6) direct measures. The strategies differ depending upon the time frame in which they are applied. That is, different operations are required prior to commencement, during the initiation of the evaluation, and when evaluation procedures are to be integrated into routine organizational activities. It is concluded that: (1) in planning the implementation of evaluation, the implications are that implementation strategies should persuade rather than enforce cooperation; (2) cognitive and perceptual changes must be accompanied by behavioral changes; and (3) different management practices will be applicable at different time intervals in the evaluation procedure. (PN)

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EVALUATION TRAINING AND SERVICES AUSTRALIA PTY. LTD.
SUITE 3, 564 ST KILDA ROAD, MELBOURNE 3004. (03) 51 1467

DIRECTOR
Dr. Anona F. Armstrong
B.A., DIPPUB POL., PH.D., M.A.PS.S

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING EVALUATION IMPLEMENTATION

DR. ANONA F. ARMSTRONG,
EVALUATION TRAINING AND SERVICES AUSTRALIA PTY. LTD.,
SUITE 3, 564 ST. KILDA ROAD,
MELBOURNE, VICTORIA,
AUSTRALIA. 3205

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STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING EVALUATION IMPLEMENTATION

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a model for guiding the procedures involved in implementing evaluation. It describes six strategies directed towards gaining access to and the co-operation of individuals and the organization in which evaluation is to be introduced.

The strategies differ depending upon the time frame in which they are applied. That is, different operations are required prior to the commencement, during the initiation of the evaluation, and when evaluation procedures are to be integrated into routine organizational activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Criticisms of evaluation revolve around political, social, psychological and implementation problems. In the 1980s practitioners met the criticisms by new paradigms which took account of the social context in which programs operate, the complexity of the problems being addressed and the constraints posed by the human element in organizational processes and structures. Models of evaluation emerged that attempted to explain the context of evaluation (Stufflebeam 1983), the relationship between system elements (Borich and Jemelka 1982, Armstrong 1983, Wholey 1977), the role of evaluation providing different feedback loops to different decision hierarchies in the program system (Armstrong 1985), the conflicting values, expectations and purposes of the audiences that evaluation is expected to serve and the use of evaluation results (Patton 1978, Stake 1975, MacDonald 1985, Scriven 1980, Weiss 1985, Jamrozik 1985).

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the reasons for resistance to evaluation and the factors that affect adoption of new procedures, and present a model for guiding the planning of evaluation implementation strategies.

RESISTANCE TO EVALUATION

Evaluation is disruptive, innovative and a vehicle of change. People resist change which threatens their basic security, that they do not understand, and when it is forced upon them. (Spicer 1952). Resistance occurs when those affected by change perceive it as threatening, when it challenges currently held beliefs and values or when it changes the distribution of power and influence.

Evaluation is threatening when it arouses fear. Research shows that the fears are associated with threats to job security, loss of prestige or status, devaluation of current knowledge or skills, or the highlighting of lack of appropriate skills (NIMH 1973).

Fear of loss of self-esteem or sense of competency and/or fear of exposure of weak points has been associated with learning new methods of work and challenges to already learnt theoretical frameworks and practices. Alternatively, difficulties have arisen because of evaluators' lack of recognition of current successful efforts.

The purpose of evaluation implementation strategies is to persuade people that the rewards of evaluation outweigh the reasons for resistance. They are intended to dispel fear, develop understanding of the evaluation, encourage ownership of and commitment to the evaluation, and ensure that the evaluation results will be used.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE ADOPTION OF EVALUATION

Weiss (1985) identifies several individual and organizational factors that inhibit the use of evaluation including intellectual-cognitive limits due to disciplinary and language barriers between the program staff and evaluators; the difficulty of knowing which evaluation information will serve decisions or what are the critical issues; the lack of appropriate dissemination of evaluation results; and the fragmentation of

authority, i.e. decision making is usually incremental and there is often no commitment and little authority to implement the results.

Successful organizations are facing challenges to come up with new ideas, to develop creative responses to change, and to show more innovation, enterprise and initiative (Kanter 1985). The introduction of evaluation procedures and the implementation of action plans arising from evaluation is an innovative response to the pressures experienced by organizations in today's fast changing, competitive and uncertain environment.

The failure of innovations is due to lack of clarity about the innovation, lack of capability to perform a required task, lack of necessary support materials, incompatibility with organizational arrangements, inadequate resources, distractions from training in implementing the innovation, and lack of implementation training (Roberts-Gray and Gray 1983).

The adoption of innovation, that is, the practical application of ideas and the use of research results, were explored by Rogers and Shoemaker (1970).

The factors affecting adoption of an innovation are:

1. The power leaders.

   Recognized leaders with power and influence can influence adoption. Without such support to give the organization time to adjust, innovators usually succumb to the hostility of opponents of change (Lippitt 1965).

2. The source of the message.

   The more prestigious the source of the message, the more notice is taken of the message. Higher credibility is attached to a source seen as an expert in the field and as having no vested interest in the outcome of the message.

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3. Participation in decision-making.

Studies of participatory and industrial democracy have shown that workers are committed to situations in which they have a major influence on the decisions.

4. The characteristics of the adopting people.

Rogers (1962) identified five classes of adoptors based upon their degree of innovativeness: innovators (venturesome); early adoptors (respectful); early majority (deliberate); later majority (sceptical); and laggards (traditional). Early adoptors tend to be more modern, better educated, have greater rationality and a more favourable attitude towards change and risk.

5. Communication channels.

The preferred communication channels for innovations are those that are close in contact with the origin of the new ideas. The mass media is appropriate for the early adoptors and the majority. Inter-personal communication from peers is important for laggards.

6. Organization context and social norms.

Innovation is more likely to be accepted if it is seen as meeting some need in the organization and as fitting in with the current values and experienced members of the organization. Consequently there is likely to be a greater acceptance in times of crisis (Havelock 1969).

7. Capability.

The successful implementation of an innovation depends upon the capability of both the users and the organization. User capability refers to the knowledge, skills and expertise of individual members of the organization. Organization capability refers to the facilities, structure, rules, etc. that enable implementation to occur. (Roberts-Gray and Gray 1983).

8. Organization structure.

Kanter (1985) identified the differences between the structure of companies that were closed or open to innovation. Segmented organizations are likely to be anti-change orientated and prevent innovation. Segmentalism "is concerned with compartmentalising actions, events and problems and keeping each piece isolated from the others". Segmentalist structures occur when departments are "walled off from one another, level above from level below, field officer from headquarters, labour from management or men from women" (p.28). In such companies problems are narrowly defined independently of their context and connections to other problems. It is assumed that problems can be solved when they are carved into pieces and the pieces assigned to specialists to work on in isolation.

As any change threatens to disturb the regularity of segments the system is designed to protect itself against deviations and ensure that individuals have sufficient awe and respect to maintain their roles without question.

Segmentalism inhibits innovation because segmentalism discourages people from seeing and hence being motivated to solve problems. It discourages entrepreneurial activities because traditional rather than novel ways of coping are preferred. Furthermore, specialized biases and political conflicts are likely to inhibit innovation and co-operation.

In contrast, integrative structures encourage the "treatment of problems as wholes" considering the wider implications of actions. Such organizations reduce rancorous conflict and isolation between organizational units, create mechanisms for the exchange of new ideas and information across organizational boundaries, ensure that multiple perspectives will be taken into account in decision making and provide coherance and direction to the whole organization. In team

orientated, co-operative environments, innovation flourishes." (p.28).

The organization open to innovation is less category-conscious, has a large number of integrative mechanisms encouraging fluidity of boundaries, the free flow of ideas and empowerment of people to act on new information. There is likely to be a sense of unity and identification with the organization, respect for individuals within the organization, and reward systems that tend towards investment-in-the-future orientation.

MOTIVATION TO UTILIZE EVALUATION RESULTS

Individuals use evaluation. Their behaviour is determined by the relative importance of attitudinal and normative considerations (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975).

Attitudes are shaped by a person's beliefs that the behaviour leads to certain outcomes and his evaluation of these outcomes. Attitude towards evaluation will be determined by (a) the information available, e.g. the benefits of the evaluation, and (b) an assessment of the value of the information, e.g. will the evaluation lead to the benefits and will the benefits advantage the individual.

The subjective norm is the result of the person's beliefs that specific individuals or groups think that he should or should not perform the behaviour (e.g. peer views about the evaluation) and his motivation to comply with the specific referents (e.g. his desire for inclusion in the work group. awareness that promotion will result from implementation of evaluation results).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING EVALUATIONS

The implications of the above research into resistance to change, factors that affect the adoption of innovations, and the prediction of behaviour is that evaluation is more likely to be successful if it is adopted first by innovators and opinion leaders, it is introduced by independent experts in evaluation, people impacted by the evaluation have some say and involvement in its introduction, if the organizational climate is such that leaders endorse the introduction of evaluation, the evaluation is seen to meet some need, if the organization is open to new ideas and flows of information, and if the evaluation is integrated into overall organization functions. Support for the evaluation may take the form of facilities, resource allocation, new management structures, etc.

Participation in the evaluation would be encouraged by getting the people who are to be evaluated or who deliver the services involved in the process of evaluation. They could define problems, identify needs, carry out evaluation tasks and disseminate and utilize the results.

Individuals are more likely to participate in and use evaluation if they perceive benefits to themselves and are motivated to comply by leaders and peer pressures.

A condition of their involvement and commitment may be the acquisition of skills required in evaluation (such as those of negotiation, facilitation, data collection, etc.).

AN IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

The process of adoption of an innovation occurs in stages. Lewin (1962) identifies three stages: orientation, where the user identifies benefits; initiation, where the user gives an innovation a trial, evaluates the benefits and sees how it can be integrated into routine practice; and integration, where it becomes part of routine practice. At each stage in the adoption of evaluation procedures, different strategies can be focussed either on the user of the evaluation or the organization. (Figure 1).

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING EVALUATION

There are at least six strategies for successfully implementing program budgeting and evaluation: power, communication, consultation, reinforcement, training and direct measures. Each strategy is applied in different ways at each stage in the implementation process. (Table 1).

Power/coercive strategies emphasize political and economic sanctions. Leadership endorsement is essential in the orientation stage. Leaders must demonstrate that they want evaluation and maintain a continuing series of reinforcing messages. Kanter (1985) refers to the symbolic aspects of strategy after events are in motion. The views and expectations of stakeholders should be canvassed and later, formal agreement is reached. Funding or promotion may depend on co-operation or more funding may be channelled to departments which volunteer to introduce the program. In the individual user, peer or union pressures may affect adoption. Finally, the formal rules of the organization will integrate the operation of the new evaluation procedures.

Communication of information is important to both the evaluator and the program staff. The evaluator needs to know the objectives of the evaluation, the terms of reference (if there are any) and to understand the context of the program. The user

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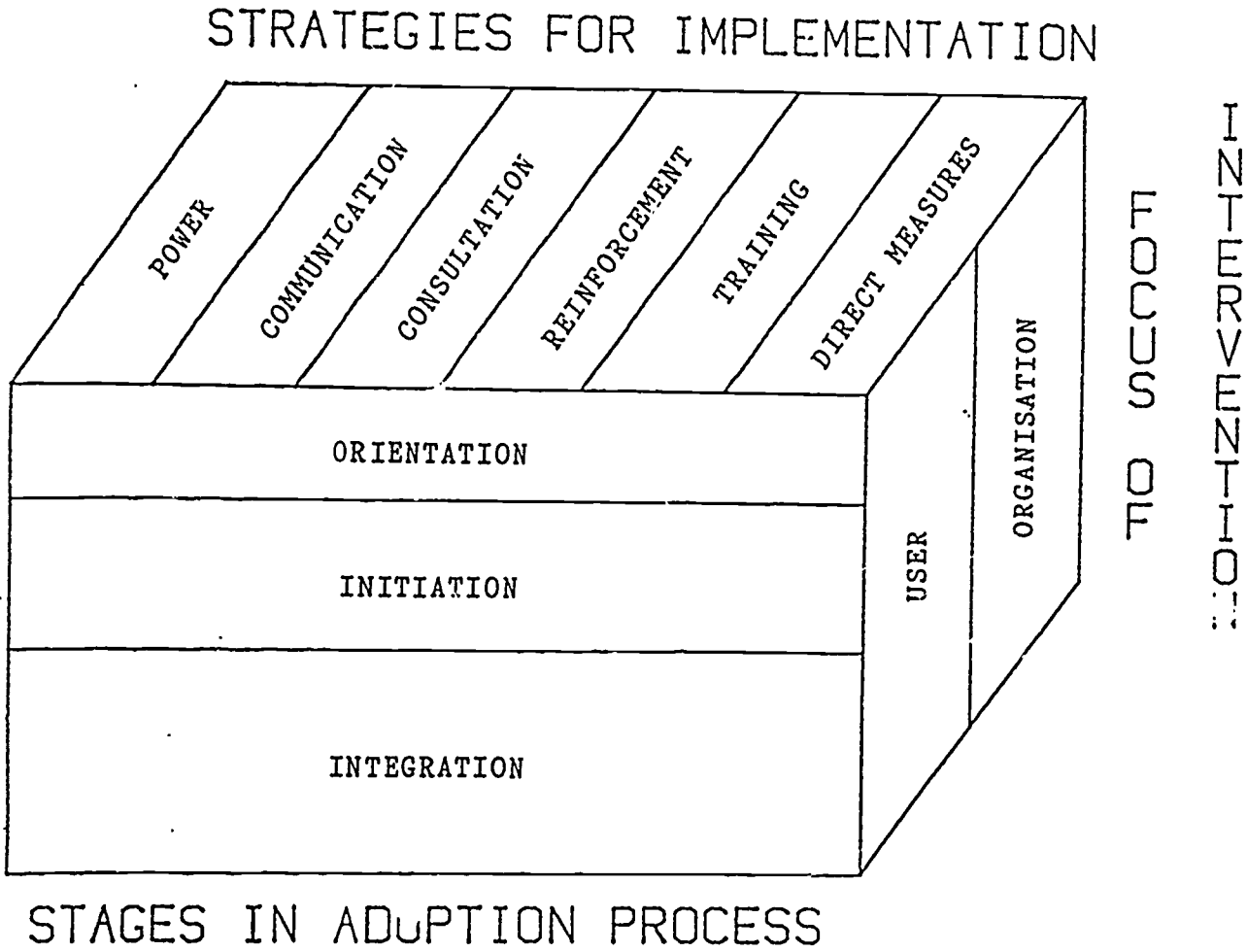

FIGURE 1. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

TABLE 1. STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS FOR MANAGING THE HUMAN ELEMENT IN EVALUATION

STRATEGIES	ORIENTATION	INITIATION	INTEGRATION
Power	Leadership Endorsement	Letters of agreement Basis of funding	Organisational rules
Communication	Information for evaluator (context) Information for user (Benefits)	Opinion leaders bulletins Wide dissemination meet criticisms/real grievances	Routine Information systems
Consultation	Person to Person/group meetings Involve users	Group meetings Evaluator support	Feedback Interpretation
Reinforcement	Marketing News	Trial Peer pressures On going feedback Staff development experiences	Recognition Promotion/rewards on basis of evaluation
Training	Evaluation skills	Dissemination/ Interpretation skills	Using evaluation/ Information skills
Direct	Direct resources to evaluation Links with evaluator and users	Link evaluation and and planning Develop data information system	Evaluation regular activity Responsibility to user

needs realistic information about: the benefits of using evaluation results (what's in it for me?), security arrangements, the purpose of the evaluation and how to use the results in decision making. At the initiation stage the evaluator will make direct contact with opinion leaders (the venturesome) and mass media (e.g. the organization's newsletter) will alert the majority of users (the deliberate and sceptical innovators). The aim at this stage is to develop an understanding of and expectation for change. At the integration stage the use of evaluation will be routinized.

In addition to information, the user may need person to person or group consultation to encourage commitment, understanding and to reduce the threat of evaluation. Feedback on their efforts is essential.

Reinforcement means providing rewarding experiences. Initially it may mean identifying with the new innovation described in the organization's marketing news. At the initiation stage, staff development experiences and recognition will enhance adoption. Particularly, in formative evaluation, focussing on identifying critical success factors in the program and avoiding a singular crusade to find the trouble spots will be more successful in improving the program without reducing staff morale to zero. Integration occurs when the use of evaluation is seen as a basis for promotion.

Although many government departments in Australia have introduced evaluation programs, few devote the necessary resources to ensuring that the user receives the training required for successful implementation and use of results.

Finally, the direct action strategy requires that the organization devotes adequate resources to the implementation process, to developing links between policy analysts, data analysts, the program staff or other users. This model of implementation is based on a philosophy of fostering autonomy and responsibility in management. An organization with centralized authoritative and segmented structures may consider modification of existing management practices. The integration of these activities mean that the evaluation program becomes a regular monitoring activity.

CONCLUSION

In planning the implementation of evaluation the implications are (1) implementation strategies should persuade rather than enforce co-operation, (2) cognitive and perceptual changes must be accompanied by behavioural changes, and (3) different management practices will be applicable at different time intervals in the evaluation procedure.

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