

Evaluation Research: A Case Study of an Intergenerational Program for Visually Impaired Seniors

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Today's Presenters

Susanne Bleiberg-Seperson



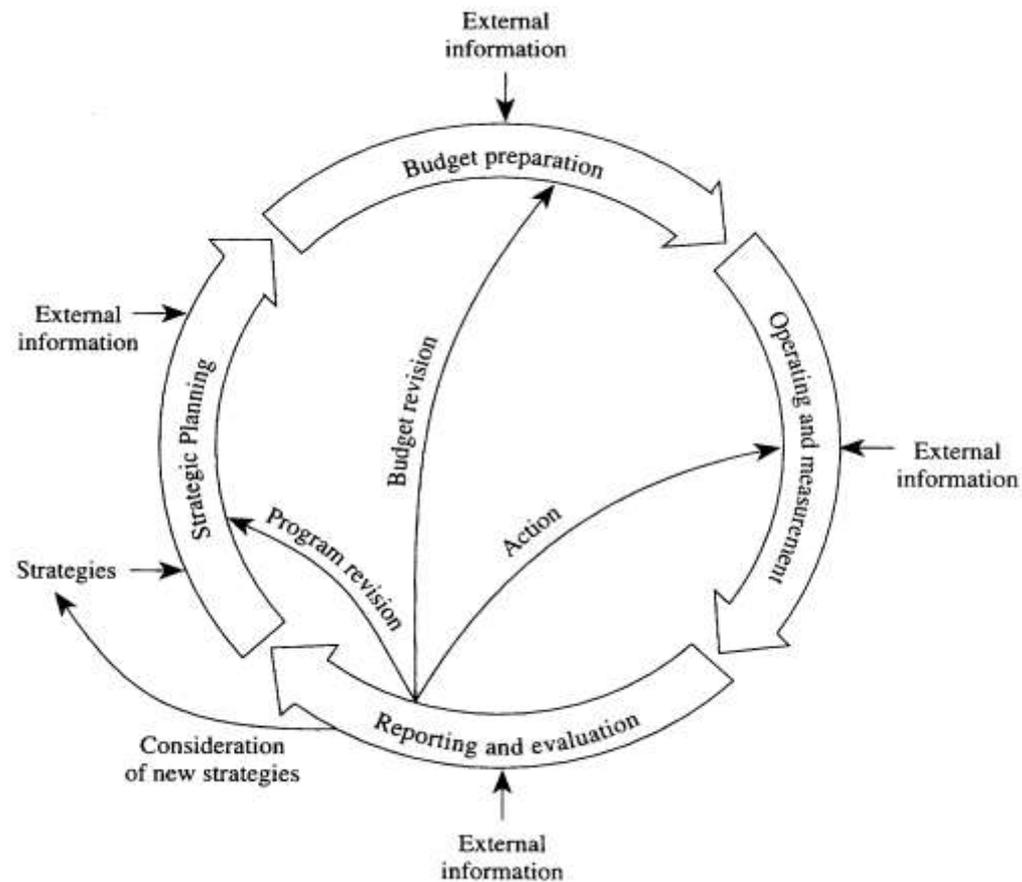
Kevin Brabazon



Management or Research?

- Both!
- From a management perspective, allows improvements in programming or strategic planning
- From a research perspective, adds to the body of knowledge about what produces changes in participant behavior
- Informs practice, theory and policy

Phases of Management Control



Goals and Objectives

- In strategy formulation, goals and objectives are established
- Goals and objectives lead to strategic planning [programming]
- Some performance measures [outcomes] can be derived directly from objectives
- Performance measures are important for control of operations [management view]

Plan your Evaluation from the Beginning [if possible]

- Establish performance measures when you plan the program
- Build data collection into the operation of the program
- Try to ensure that the data is useful to the operational manager [otherwise it may not be collected!]

Types of Performance Measures

- **Process Measures:** Measures of “outputs” or “inputs” [how many people involved, their demographic characteristics, how many services they receive, etc.]
- **Outcome [Results] Measures:** What did the program accomplish? [e.g. provide services, improve reading skills, better attendance at school, reduce depression, improve intergenerational communication, etc.]

Measurement!

- **Process Measures:** Count, count and count!
 - *How many clients enter the program,
 - *How many drop out,
 - *How many of each type of service each client receives,
 - *How long each service intervention lasts,
 - *How many clients each case worker handles,
 - *etc.

Great for efficiency, not for effectiveness

More Measurement!

- **Outcome Measures: Only count the results!**
 - *Test reading skills before the program begins, and after it has operated for a while
 - *Collect attendance data before the program begins and after it has been in place for a while
 - *Use a depression scale as part of the intake procedure, and test clients again when the program has had time to be effective
 - *Use a survey instrument that codes answers based on a numerical scale

Great for effectiveness, not for efficiency

Then Forget the Measurement!

- Do one or two **case studies** that illustrate the changes that take place through the program. This may involve interviewing the client, the client's case worker, the children's teachers, or other interested parties. Or observe client behavior [ethnographic study]. Paint a complete picture, and add photos if the client approves.

Great for adding meaning to your story

Different Types of Evaluation

- Outcome Evaluation – did the program accomplish its objectives, i.e., did it work, is it “effective”?
- Process Evaluation – how did the program accomplish its objectives?
- Implementation Analysis – was the program implemented the way it was designed?

And the Final Questions.....

- What if my program has already started?
- What is a proxy pre-test?
- Do I need a comparison [or control] group?
- Should I even think about random assignment?
- What is “good enough” for my evaluation?
- If I need help, can I use students? Graduate students or undergraduates? Are students such as social work interns better than public policy students or should I work with a research class?

Case Example : Using College Students to Evaluate an Intergenerational Program

Purpose: To collect data from students and seniors participating in an intergenerational program (IG) at Visions, Inc. in order to:

- provide quantitative data for Visions, Inc. to be used for evaluation and fund-raising for the program
- teach basic research methods to undergraduate sociology students at Dowling College
- compare teenagers' and seniors' attitudes on 4 scales – (Scale 1) Attitudes towards Teenagers;
(Scale 2) Attitudes towards the Elderly;
(Scale 3) Attitudes toward Community Service, and
(Scale 4) Attitudes towards Disability.

Data Collected by:
Students in two basic research methods courses during Fall 2009 and Spring 2010

Christine Abruscato

Michelle Berry

Melissa Bryan

Cheryl Butler

Lisette Cepeda

Elyse Feldman

Azuleni Garcia

Sarah Harrow

Krystil Hofman

Lori Keller

Guirlene Lindor

Payel Masih

Melissa Parks

Philana Thorne

Elese Richards

Chamalie Sewpersaud

Obstacles to Project

- location
- time
- money
- access to computers for high school student participants in IG program
- year long project with two classes

Research Methods

- Observation
- Telephone interviews
- Survey questionnaires
- SPSS program

Attitude Scales

Attitudes towards Teenagers Scale - developed by students in the research methods classes

- (2) Attitudes toward the Elderly
- (3) Attitude towards Community Service
- (4) Attitude toward Disabilities Scales

developed by Dr. Karl Pillemer and Leslie Schultz of the Applied Gerontology Research Institute of Cornell University as part of the evaluation of the Student Assisted Independent Living (SAIL) project conducted for the Foundation for Long Term Care, Albany, NY (2002).

Scales were modified slightly to focus on attitudes toward visually impaired people.

Reference: Pillemer, K. & Schultz, L. (2002). Evaluation of the student assisted independent living (SAIL) service-learning project. In (S. Bleiberg Seperson & C. Hegeman (Eds.), *Elder care and service learning: A handbook* (pp. 252-259). Westport, CT: Auburn House, Greenwood Publishing Co.

Sample

- 16 students participating as paid volunteers in the intergenerational program answered the questionnaire out of 50 youth participating in the program (32%)
- 31 blind or visually impaired seniors out of 180 seniors participating in the IG program (17.2%) participated in the telephone interviews.
- Non-random sample - seniors were asked at a general meeting if they wanted to be contacted via telephone for an interview
- participating students completed the written survey sent via email after repeated requests by the student researchers and their supervisor.
- Questionnaires were emailed to Dowling students
- All student and senior participants were promised confidentiality.

Likert Scales

- Strongly Agree
- Mildly Agree
- Mildly Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Scale 1: Attitudes towards Teenagers

Teenagers are:

- Naïve
- Respectful
- Self-centered
- Confused
- Tech savvy (like their cell phones, I-pods, etc.)
- Unmotivated
- Have lots of energy
- Fun to be around
- Use drugs
- Helpful
- Creative
- Immature
- Have positive attitudes
- Drink alcohol
- Appreciate family
- Appreciate teachers
- Like older people
- Dislike school
- Involved with gangs

Scale 2. Attitudes toward the Elderly

1. Most older people are set in their ways and unable to change.
2. Most older people are not isolated.
3. Older people are apt to complain.
4. Older people can learn new things just as well as younger people can.
5. People become wiser with the coming of old age.
6. Older people are often against needed reform in our society because they want to hang on to the past.
7. Most older people are in good health
8. Most older people spend too much time prying into the affairs of others.
9. In most jobs, older people can perform as well as younger people.

Scale 3. Attitude towards Community Service

1. It is the responsibility of the community to take care of people who can't take care of themselves.
2. I am good at helping people.
3. I am not very interested in working on problems in the community.
4. It is important to help people in general, whether you know them personally or not.
5. It is hard to find the time to work on other people's problems.

Scale 4. Attitude towards Disabilities

1. A younger person with a chronic condition is likely to be brave and courageous.
2. People with chronic conditions maintain a positive attitude toward life
3. A deaf person who can't talk or use proper grammar is just as bright as you or me.
4. A blind person is just as bright as you or me.
5. People who are blind maintain a positive attitude toward life.
6. Children should not ask prying questions about people in wheelchairs.

Findings and Analysis: Descriptive

- Students working as paid volunteers in the IG program at Visions feel positive about their experience and believe it benefits the visually-impaired seniors.
- Seniors in the IG program at Visions feel positively about the program and like the staff and students.

Findings and Analysis: Inferential

- t-tests and chi-square tests used to compare the two groups' attitudes
- No difference between the two groups' attitudes on scale 1, 3, and 4 (attitudes towards teens, elders, and community service).
- Statistically significant difference found only on scale 2 with the seniors viewing themselves more positively than the students did (*chi-square $p = .01$, t-test $p = .038$*).

Conclusions:

Despite obstacles to be overcome, collaboration between agencies and colleges can be useful for the:

- agencies
- students
- college
- social science research

Questions???



Save the Dates



- **March 15, 1:00-2:00PM** - Learning Network Webinar –
Topic: Youth Leadership
- **March 28, 1:30-2:30PM** - briefing to recognize MetLife Foundation/Generations United Best Intergenerational Communities Award recipients.
All are welcome, RSVP required.
- **April 19, 1:00-2:00PM EST** – Learning Network Webinar -
Topic: Grandfamilies
- **July 30 – August 2, 2013:** Generations United Conference in Washington, DC

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