

Appendix C: Profiles of Evaluation and Improvement Approaches

Accreditation

Definition

“Accreditation” describes both a process and a status that identifies an organization as having met established quality criteria. These criteria are determined by a professional agency or commission. An organization/program seeks accredited status voluntarily through a process of being *reviewed, judged*, and, if appropriate, *granted* accreditation. Example accrediting agencies for after-school programs include National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA), National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Council on Accreditation (COA), state-level accreditation, and city-level accreditation (e.g., Madison, WI).

For before- and after-school programs, these criteria typically involve measures of quality in the areas of: staff/child interaction; developmentally appropriate activities and materials; health and safety; staffing; physical environment; and administration.

Purpose/rationale behind this approach

The purpose of accreditation is for a program to demonstrate their commitment to providing high quality service. This demonstration is desired for before- and after-school programs for multiple reasons:

- for parents who are choosing among programs;
- for enrolled families to feel assured their children are “in good hands”;
- quality assurance for funders and/or sponsoring agency;
- for employers looking to offer quality child care to employees’ children;
- to attract high quality staff; and
- as a marketing tool in the community.

Another purpose of accreditation is to reap the benefits of the process, including: valuable feedback from outside observers, a framework for getting the program’s policies written and organized, added motivation to implement program improvements, and validation of program’s good work.

Key roles of players in this approach

1. The accrediting agency creates quality criteria by which the programs will be judged.
2. The accreditation process is usually started by the director or head administrator of an organization. This individual leads the process by filling out initial paperwork, making contacts with the accrediting agency, and making arrangements for site visit(s).
3. At a minimum, staff and parents of enrolled children are required to provide input in the self-study phase. Further involvement is optional and varies by the program.
4. An outside observer from the accrediting agency visits the site to validate information given by the program. This individual or group will evaluate all the information in order to provide the program feedback and delineate any changes that must be made before accreditation will be granted.

Process for conducting this approach

1. Initiate process with accrediting agency (forms & fees). Example costs: \$700 per site (NSACA); \$500 (NAFCC).
2. Complete self-study process: program personnel and parents meet to determine how well their program meets the accrediting agency's criteria, make needed changes, and report compliance to agency. Often, surveys are used to gather information. Sometimes, peer review is also involved.
3. Validation: trained validators make on-site visit to verify the accuracy of self-study.
4. Make any additional required changes.
5. Accreditation decision. The process takes about 8-12 months on average.

Values, premises, & characteristics associated with this approach

- Compliance with outside criteria demonstrates "high quality."
- It is worth the time and money to gain accreditation.

Common factors that facilitate success in using this approach

- Money & time;
- Seeing accreditation as a way of life, not a one time event;
- Leadership who guide the process; and
- Staff who are interested and engaged in the process.

Common factors that inhibit use of this approach

- Changes required by accrediting agency are difficult to implement;
- Differences between accreditation standards and licensing requirements; and
- Staff turnover.

Action Research

Definition

Action research can be described as a family of research methodologies that pursue action (or change) and research (or understanding) at the same time. In most of its forms, it does this by using a cyclical process alternating between action and critical reflection and by continuously refining methods, data, and interpretation. Action research is an emergent and iterative process, which is usually qualitative and participative. Four, basic, defining themes are: empowerment of participants, collaboration through participation, acquisition of knowledge, and social change. Action research has been described as "an informal, qualitative, formative, subjective, interpretive, reflective, and experiential model of inquiry in which all individuals involved in the study are knowing and contributing participants."

Purpose/rationale behind this approach

The origins of action research are unclear within the literature. However, many authors attribute the concept of action research to American psychologist Kurt Lewin in the mid-1940s. The central focus of his theory is that in order to change social practices, the practitioners themselves must be involved in the process. The process, he argued, should proceed as a spiral of steps composed of planning, action, and evaluation of the results of the action. Action research also has roots in other traditions, such as community development, action inquiry, action science, and practitioner research.

Key roles of players in this approach

Although practitioners are always involved in action research to some extent, their involvement varies with each type of action research. In Scientific-Technical Action Research, there is a researcher/evaluator who is in charge of the study with significant input from practitioners. Practitioner input includes helping define the evaluation questions and helping with the analysis. In Practical-Deliberative Action Research and Critical-Emancipatory Action Research, practitioners have an even more active role. They are full participants in every state of the evaluation process. The role of the evaluator in this context is more facilitative than directive. He/she acts as a resource person who catalyzes the stakeholders in defining their problems and in supporting them as they work towards solutions.

The literature is unclear on the issue of external versus internal evaluators in action research. This terminology is not present in the indexes of the action research texts investigated for this summary.

Process for conducting this approach

1. Adopt an exploratory stance, where an understanding of the problem is developed and plans are made for some form of an intervention. (*Reconnaissance or "Planning"*)
Recommended that you ask questions such as, "What is happening already? What am I trying to change? With whom must I negotiate?"
2. Carry out the intervention. (*Action*)
3. During, and around the time of, the intervention, gather data systematically (e.g., keep a diary, take observational notes, tape record meetings). (*Observation*)
4. Return to step one and repeat until sufficient understanding of the problem and solution is achieved. (*Reflection & Revision*)

Values, premises, & characteristics associated with this approach

- There are three minimal requirements for an action research project to exist: (a) the subject matter is a social practice; (b) it proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting; and (c) the people who are responsible for the practice are involved in each stage of the project.
- There is little or no separation of research from practice, little or no separation of knowing and doing.
- All participants must be allowed to influence the work, and the wishes of those who do not choose to participate must be respected
- The development of the work must remain visible and open to suggestions from others.
- Permission must be obtained before making observations or examining documents produced for other purposes.
- Descriptions of others' work and points of view must be negotiated with those concerned before being published.
- The researcher must accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality.

Common factors that facilitate success with this approach

- Participants who recognize the existence of shortcomings in their program's activities and who would like to adopt some initial stance in regard to the problem, formulate a plan, carry out an intervention, evaluate the outcomes, and develop further strategies in an iterative fashion;
- Enables significant levels of active *involvement*;
- Enables people to *perform* significant tasks;
- Provides *support* for people as they learn to act for themselves;

- Encourages plans and activities that people are able to *accomplish* themselves;
- Deals *personally* with people rather than with representatives or agents.

Common factors that inhibit use of this approach

Four practical problems to conducting effective action research:

- Formulating a method of work which is sufficiently economical as regards the amount of data gathering and data processing for a practitioner to undertake alongside a normal workload;
- Creating action research techniques which are specific to enough to offer a practitioner genuinely new insights and avoid being too minimal to be valid or too elaborate to be feasible;
- Making methods readily available and accessible to any practitioner who wants to practice them; and
- Contributing a genuine improvement in understanding and skill, beyond prior competence, in return for the time and energy expended.

Continuous Improvement

Definition

- As applied to Total Quality Management—improvement is tied to developing a product in a better, more efficient way.
- As applied to learning organizations—improvement is more closely connected to individuals developing an enhanced sense of purpose in what they are doing.
- Dependent upon all levels within an organization utilizing methodical approaches when collecting data, solving problems, and making decisions.
- The norm of continuous improvement is a belief that learning is never finished; professional development is dynamic.

Values, premises, & characteristics associated with this approach

- Three concepts which constitute the foundation for success
 - Meaningful teamwork
 - Clear, measurable goals
 - Regular collection and analysis of performance data
- 21st Century Learning's 5 principles of Continuous Improvement Management
 - Customer-Driven Services—identify, meet and exceed customer expectations
 - Core Activities—identify how your program meets customer needs
 - Data-Driven Monitoring—use data early on to monitor progress and solve problems
 - Inclusive Partnership—include customers and stakeholders decision making process, establish joint goals between school and community
 - Continuous Improvement—use on-going measurement to continuously improve program and evaluate progress
- Quest's cores beliefs about school improvement
 - Things can always be better; improvement is a process
 - Energy for improvement comes from the synergy of collaboration
 - Searching is more important than finding—the asking of powerful questions and search for the answers
 - Solution-finding is an inside-out process

- From 21st Century Learning Continuous Improvement Management Process
 1. Strengthen Program Design
 - a) Stock-taking
 - b) Vision & Goals
 - c) Objectives
 - d) Activities
 - e) Measures
 2. Manage Program Quality
 - a) Implementation Process
 - b) Communication & Coordination of Services
 3. Assess & Communicate Results
 - a) Project Summary
 - b) Results
 - c) Communication of Results
 - d) Implementation Critique
 - e) Next Steps

Common factors that facilitate success with this approach

- Results that are connected to processes;
- Short-term, measurable successes contribute to cultural change and an orientation towards results; and
- Strategies that support development:
 - Study groups
 - Action research groups
 - Observation and assessment
 - Peer coaching
 - Training and follow-up
 - Participation on school improvement and/or curriculum writing teams
 - Problem-solving sessions

Empowerment Evaluation

Definition

Process, primarily used with programs not organizations, that utilizes evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination with quantitative and qualitative methods while focusing on the empowerment process.

Purpose/rationale behind this approach

To help people help themselves and improve their programs through forms of self-evaluation and reflection.

Key roles of players in this approach

- Participants conduct their own evaluation often with coaching or facilitation from an outside evaluator (depending on program capacity) with the goal being for participants to become self-sufficient.
- Evaluator and participants are on an even plane and learn from each other.
- An evaluation coach may help assist with creating facilitation teams, working with resistance, energizing tired participants, resolving protocol issues, clearing unnecessary obstacles, or clarifying miscommunications.

- Evaluator takes on different roles relative to the needs of the participants from the individual program (e.g., training, facilitation, advocacy, and illuminative roles). She/he is a teacher, collaborator, and participant.
- Evaluator establishes issues relevant to the programs' development and helps determine his/her role based on these issues (provides information and direction to keep the effort on track).
- Evaluator facilitates an increase in power relative to decision-making and solves developmental problems implicit in social programs.

Process for conducting this approach

- Take stock (identify goals and desired outcomes). Participants may rate their program and/or themselves on a scale from 1-10, documenting with evidence. An ethnographic interview may also be used.
- Establish goals by considering the keys to program improvement and the program direction for the future. Participants may determine where they would like to be able to rate their program and/or themselves in the future. Goals may be set that will help warrant future rating (need to be realistic and account for perspective of clients and supervisors). Intermediate goals may be selected to help link daily activities to long-term goals.
- Developing strategies [outcome assessment (e.g., desired outcomes, measures, and indicators)]—participants also need to develop their own strategies for meeting program and personal goals:
 1. Using brainstorming, critical review, and consensual agreement participants develop strategies to accomplish program objectives; and
 2. Strategies are regularly reviewed for effectiveness.
- Determining what types of evidence are needed to document progress toward goals (impact assessment):
 1. Participants decide what documentation is needed to monitor their progress; and
 2. Documentation of ideas serves as required evidence for how they met specific program goals.

Values, premises, & characteristics associated with this approach

- Evaluator cannot empower people, people empower themselves, with assistance.
- Programs value and worth is not end point of evaluation as in traditional evaluation but is part of ongoing improvement process.
- Participants learn to evaluate progress towards self-determined goals and to change strategies according to ongoing assessment.
- Stakeholders conduct the work in a group format with a focus on the entire group or agency, not individuals.
- Based on commitment, truth, and honesty.
- Advocacy is a byproduct of the evaluation based on the results of the data
- Democratic approach.
- Not all stakeholders have equal influence or access to power.
- Evaluation should aim to deal with issues and problems of everyday work.
- Training is an essential part of the process used to map out categories and highlight concerns.
- Evaluator should facilitate in order to help others conduct self-evaluation.
- Self-evaluation is used as an advocacy tool.

- Evaluation process should lead to illumination or enlightening experiences for involved participants on all levels.
- Evaluation should lead to liberation and help free participants from existing roles.

Common factors that facilitate success in using this approach

- Sensitivity and adaptation to the local setting;
- Internalization of evaluation as an aspect of the planning and management of the program;
- Checks and balances with participant involvement at all levels of the organization and use of external evaluator as a “critical friend”;
- Ongoing training as new skills are needed;
- Adaptation and response to decision making and authority structures;
- Creation of opportunity and a forum to challenge authority and management by providing data about program operations from the ground up;
- Latitude for participants to experiment, take risks, take responsibility for their actions, and collaborate;
- Environment conducive to sharing success and failures and helps community develop its commitment, resources, and skills;
- An atmosphere that is honest, self-critical, trusting, and supportive;
- Outside evaluator must be charged with monitoring progress in order to keep the evaluation effort credible, useful, and in check. In addition, the evaluator must provide additional rigor, reality checks, and quality control throughout the process ;
- Participants with little experience in evaluation need to use the outside evaluator as a coach so they can become comfortable with and knowledgeable about the evaluation process;
- Voices of community members should be actively included;
- Participants are assisted in utilizing the findings to strengthen their resources;
- Requires ongoing collection, reflection, and feedback of information;
- Focus on building strengths as opposed to finding fault;
- Flexibility in problem solving and approaching problems in new ways; and
- Quantitative and qualitative methodology.

Common factors that inhibit use of this approach

- Misuse of results (e.g., presence of bias);
- Confusion resulting from conflicting results of the evaluation; and
- Not balancing the interests of participants and the evaluator.

Learning Organization/Organizational Learning

Definition

- The ways in which members of an organization learn, individually and collectively, as they respond to demands for better organizational activity.
- Organizational learning is conscious and reflective approach to practice.
- Central to the concept of organizational learning in most definitions are:
 1. Learning from past experience
 2. Acquiring knowledge
 3. Processing on an organizational level
 4. Identifying and correcting problems

5. Organizational change.
 - Varying definitions utilized by different sectors
 - Government agencies make training synonymous with being a “learning organization”
 - Business sector align this term with “quality initiatives, innovation, improvement and customization of products to meet the needs of customers”
 - Management consulting firms utilize it as a marketing concept
 - Universities and educational institutions assume the role of learning organization because they “exist to foster learning”
 - Some focus on the difference between “Learning Organization” and “Organizational Learning,” others use them interchangeably
 - Some view it as a process, others as a goal or outcome.

Purpose/rationale behind this approach

- Organizational learning is seen as a powerful process for accomplishing improvement objectives, and as a strategy that is particularly useful for educational administrators who wish to work toward long-term renewal rather than ‘quick-fix’ changes.
- It is assumed to be prompted by some felt need (e.g., to respond to the call for implementing a new policy) or perception of a problem, prompted from inside or outside the school, that leads to a collective search for a solution.
- Stimuli for individual and organizational learning mentioned by teachers:
 1. External
 - a) new ministry programs
 - b) new programs being implemented in one’s school
 - c) encouragement from administrators to implement new programs
 - d) district policy initiatives
 - e) demographic changes in the student population
 2. Internal
 - a) desire to improve one’s practices
 - b) desire to do what is best for students
 - c) desire to move in the same direction as colleagues
 - d) a belief that new programs were compatible with one’s own professional goals and preferred teaching styles.

Values, premises, & characteristics associated with this approach

- Strategies for building organizational learning capacity
 - Cognitive mapping
 - Participatory evaluation
 - Professional development schools
 - Action research.
- Indicators of organizational learning
 - Raising to awareness tacit assumptions and beliefs through reflective self-analysis
 - Engaging willingly in professional learning and growth
 - Understanding systemic influences and relationships
 - Sharing information openly and honestly
 - Developing a spirit of trust, empathy, and mutual valuing
 - Examining current practices critically
 - Experimenting with new practices
 - Raising sensitive issues and information

- Understanding the inevitability of disagreement and conflict
- Managing differences of opinion through inquiry and problem-solving
- Engaging in dialogue in order to understand others' frames of reference
- Changing frames of reference as warranted by team dialogue
- Developing common understandings and language patterns
- Developing a shared vision
- Engaging in collaborative operation, planning, and decision-making practices
- Correcting disruptive power imbalances.
- Organizational learning and individual learning are not the same. Individual learning always takes place within organizational learning; however, individual learning is possible without organizational learning.
- Organizations contain “cognitive systems” that allow perception, understanding, storage, and retrieval of information.

Key roles of players in this approach

- Teachers;
- School administration—set the vision and build positive culture, help create collaborative environment, maintain high levels of expectations, model appropriate behavior, provide support for teachers on an individual basis, challenge staff to think differently about their work and how they do their work, and include teachers and staff in decision-making process;
- School staff;
- Three roles of the leader in learning organizations:
 - Designer: builds purpose and core values and turns them into business decisions through policies, strategies and structures;
 - Teacher: helps everyone to gain an understanding of the organization's “current reality” and surfaces individuals' mental modes; and
 - Steward: feels a sense of responsibility for the people in the organization and helps people to feel that they are a part of a greater purpose.

Process for conducting this approach

- Takes place at a group level;
- Phases of organizational learning:
 - a) Naming and framing—discussions were conducted in the frames of description, storytelling, and suggestion
 - b) Analyzing and integrating—analysis and evaluation of current practices
 - c) Applying and experimenting—implementation plans discussed.

*the indicators mentioned above in section 4 were then aligned with one of these phases

*these phases did not get moved through in a linear manner and sometimes occurred simultaneously

Common factors that facilitate success with this approach

- School conditions foster organizational learning.
- Clear mission and vision that is understood and shared by staff:
 - Cooperative culture where people are kind and respectful of one another;
 - Structures where teachers are allowed, and encouraged to, participate in decision-making; and
 - Clear and established short-term and personal/professional goals;
 - Adequate resources.
- Workplace support of organizational learning:

- Work and reflection time for teachers;
- Schedules that encourage collaboration;
- Well-developed communication structures and common space for working; and
- Groups organized to lead improvement efforts (these groups consist of administrators, teachers, parents, and community members).
- Conditions that foster organizational learning:
 - District/school culture that encourages collaboration, creation of records that document teacher practices, and thought processes that allow for questioning the what and why behind actions;
 - Development of school strategies;
 - Decentralized district/school structures; and
 - The appropriate amount of tension between “complexity and instability,” both internally and externally.

Common factors that inhibit use of this approach

- Barriers to organizational learning:
 - Teacher isolation;
 - Lack of time; and
 - Complexity of teaching.
- Senge’s “Learning Disabilities” (1990):
 - A focus only on “my” position in the organization;
 - Tendency to place blame when things go wrong;
 - Reactiveness disguised as proactiveness;
 - A focus on events rather than on patterns and causes of events;
 - Resistance to looking at gradual processes;
 - Lack of analysis of complex, important organizational issues; and
 - Lack of courage in asking difficult questions.

Participatory Evaluation

Definition

Participatory evaluation is applied social research involving trained evaluation personnel and practice-based decision makers in partnership. Formative evaluation is conducted with the goal of understanding programs to inform and improve implementation. Participatory evaluation:

- Recognizes range of stakeholders and engages them throughout process (e.g., design, data gathering, dissemination); and
- Enables stakeholders to reach common judgments and agree on measures to improve future results.

Participatory evaluation is the result of the merger of three concepts: (a) theories from anthropology that emphasize living with respondents in research and evaluation; (b) collective action implemented through purposeful inquirer that was promoted through action research; and (c) consciousness raising in which dialogue, reflection, and action among people make up the empowerment evaluation process.

There are two major types of participatory evaluation:

- (1) Practical Participatory Evaluation**—practical, supports program decision-making and problem-solving:
 - (1) Joint process with collaboration between stakeholders and evaluators;

- (2) Instrumental—used as support for discrete decisions;
- (3) Conceptual—used for educative or learning functions; and
- (4) Symbolic—used as persuasion or to reaffirm a decision made or further an agenda.
- (2) Transformative Participatory Evaluation**—social justice, seeks to empower community members dominated by other groups:
 - (1) All participants and researchers working collaboratively; and
 - (2) Goal is for group to eventually take over and do evaluation without evaluator.

Purpose/rationale behind this approach

- Meet the needs of employers/employees;
- Methodology using and respecting knowledge and experience of all stakeholders;
- Citizens learning to carry out their own research and assess performance of local developmental efforts through training by evaluator;
- Jointly planned actions among stakeholders and the project as a whole to improve working relationships ;
- Increase empowerment, liberation, and social justice for front-line workers, although not necessarily changing power relationships within the organization;
- Be practical (respond to needs, interests, and concerns of primary users), useful (findings are disseminated so primary users can utilize), formative (aims to improve program outcomes), and empowering;
- Provide information for program improvement or organizational development; and
- Allow groups to check on their own members to avoid biases and agendas of individual members.

Key roles of players in this approach

- Outside evaluators responsible for “nitty gritty” (e.g., analyzing data, setting up initial and sometimes repeated meetings, pulling together written results);
- Evaluator is a process facilitator whose success is measured by his/her ability to enlist stakeholders in identifying and focusing on the real issues of the situation;
- Evaluator is a critical friend who can question shared biases and group-think;
- Evaluator has six requirements:
 - (1) Training and expertise in technical research skills
 - (2) Accessible to organization for participatory activities
 - (3) Making/having resources available for the research practice
 - (4) Able to train staff in the skills of systematic inquiry
 - (5) Motivation to participate
 - (6) High tolerance for imperfection;
- Three levels of stakeholder participation:
 - (1) Very involved—active throughout all phases
 - (2) Somewhat involved—participate when time permits
 - (3) Marginally involved—may become frustrated and lack understanding because only participates on limited basis;
- Stakeholders are involved in data collection; and
- Evaluator and stakeholders must share power, but find effective way to do so ensuring everyone gets what they need.

Process for conducting this approach

- Deciding to do it
 - (1) Who decides
 - (2) Under what conditions

- Assembling the team
 - (1) Internal or external evaluators
 - (2) Skills and abilities of evaluators
- Making a plan
 - (1) Orientation to participatory evaluation
 - (2) Setting the agenda
 - (3) Defining indicators of success for one or more goals
- Collecting the data
 - (1) Deciding who will collect the data
 - (2) Choosing and adapting methods
 - (3) Measuring and monitoring for the purpose of documenting results
 - (4) Technical difficulty and adaptability to a particular level of expertise
 - (5) Cultural appropriateness
 - (6) Facilitation of learning
 - (7) Identifying barriers to participation
- Synthesizing, analyzing, and verifying the data
 - (1) Presented to participants for verification
 - (2) Verified in multiple ways at multiple stages
- Developing action plans for the future
 - (1) Deciding how to take action for continuous improvement
- Controlling and using outcomes/reports

Values, premises, & characteristics associated with this approach

- Involvement and usefulness to end users (usually requires involving an action component), while addressing their concerns, interests, and problems;
- Knowledge generation done through collective methods;
- Key stakeholders—people whose lives are influenced by and can affect or influence the future state of the program (funders, participants, program developers, staff, administrators, people who develop and evaluate the program, direct and indirect beneficiaries of evaluation, people excluded from participating in the evaluation) define what the purposes and goals of the evaluation are;
- Interested in process and results;
- Shared decision-making;
- Multiple and varied approaches to data collection (e.g., interviews, focus groups, reviews of public documents, content analysis, media analysis, questionnaires, mapping, personal observations, use rates for facilities and services, oral histories, test scores, informal communication);
- Capacity building so stakeholders can control future evaluation processes;
- Education;
- Communication and interactive discussion;
- Addressing the power structure;
- Tackling important issues; and
- Starting with an issue, defined by the stakeholders, which implies differences in opinion or controversy.

Common factors that facilitate success in using this approach

- Making results available to stakeholders as they are collected for ongoing feedback and additions/changes;

- Results of final report of evaluation discussed with stakeholders to assess what was learned, what the implications are, and how the results can be used;
- Outside evaluator examining his/her own attitudes, ideas, behavior;
- High levels of interpersonal and organizational trust and sensitivity;
- Appropriate resources and context;
- Leaders and volunteers;
- Time;
- Outside facilitators having an important role;
- Logistical and administrative support and commitment to endeavor;
- Time for group reflections and lessons learned;
- Good gender mix;
- Helping learners overcome internal and cultural blocks;
- External evaluators promotion of cultural sensitivity and good participatory practices through role modeling;
- End result including cognitive, affective, and political change within the organization (increased communication between members and higher quality evaluations);
- Details of evaluation cannot be fully identified in advance (e.g., funding);
- Final result in hands of participants, not evaluator or outside source;
- Recognition of diverse contexts and goals of participatory communities, intangible and nonquantifiable nature of many of the goals, difficulties of using standardized, traditional indicators to track a program rooted in local planning and promises of flexibility in meeting local needs;
- Not sacrificing effectiveness for accuracy;
- Stakeholders/participants from all levels of the organization; and
- Evaluation experience by some stakeholders.

Common factors that inhibit use of this approach

- Trying to generalize findings to other projects;
- Rewards and consequences not clearly spelled out; and
- When stakeholders are transient and the evaluation process is too complicated for newcomers to understand.

Total Quality Management in Education/Total Quality Education

Definition

Total Quality Education is a process that involves focusing on meeting and exceeding customer expectations, continuous improvement, sharing responsibilities with employees, and reducing scrap and rework.

Purposes/rationale behind this approach

- To promote internal change in processes and practices in order to promote improved student achievement as well as greater efficiency in resource utilization;
- Typically used in areas that most resemble business or when trying to figure out a particular problem, and is usually not applied to a whole school or district;
- Empowerment of everyone involved (students, teachers, staff, alumni, customers, parents);
- The steps guide the process in an organized way;
- Encourages teamwork versus opposition;

- It is a holistic approach that results in organization wide change; and
- The approach is proactive versus reactive in addressing issues.

Values, premises, & characteristics associated with this approach

- A shared vision and shared goals among faculty, staff, and administrators;
- Educational needs determined by students, parents, community groups, and other stakeholders;
- Long-term commitment and dedication to systematic change;
- Strive to make changes to improve education;
- Active role by teachers in overall school operations;
- Collaboration;
- Decision-making based on factual information;
- Teachers are not to blame for quality problems caused by poor systems and processes; and
- Utilization of existing resources.

Key roles of players in this approach

- Administration—need to delegate and empower teachers through teamwork;
- Teachers (employee)—need to view education from student viewpoint and work with administrators as a team;
- Students (both customer and employee) —should question the learning process and suggest changes; and
- Parents not only in role of customer but also as supplier.

Process for conducting this approach

1. Establish commitment from district and school administration.
2. Identify someone as a “Quality Coordinator.”
3. Create a mission statement.
4. Identify internal and external customers and suppliers.
5. Encourage involvement from internal and external customers on an on-going basis.
6. Gain knowledge about the Total Quality Process.
7. Institutionalize the process:
 - Measurement tools used in school districts:
 - Flow diagrams;
 - Cause-and-effect diagrams;
 - Run or control charts;
 - Scatter diagrams;
 - Pareto diagrams;
 - Nominal group techniques;
 - Force-field analysis.

Common factors that inhibit use of this approach

- People do not like to change.
- Leaders are supposed to take charge—quality requires cooperation from everyone.
- People are lazy.
- We just cannot let go of grades.
- We do not value knowledge and training enough to pay for it.
- We do not use data to improve systems.
- State mandates get in the way.

- Using “TQM” will fail where quality will succeed—cannot just use tools of TQM, you must understand deeper meaning behind quality.
- Challenges to using TQM in the educational sector:
 - Restricted resources not controlled by schools;
 - Customers and society do not always value education as a product;
 - Schools cannot control external factors that influence the school environment;
 - Reduction in financial resources;
 - Goals are set by external forces;
 - People feel change is not necessary;
 - “Monopoly” mindset of schools;
 - Teachers are not trained by the schools;
 - High turnover rate of teachers and staff; and
 - Lack of focus on customer needs.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation

Definition

Utilization-focused evaluation is an evaluation approach that consistently places the use of evaluation findings at the center of its processes. This approach is most concerned with involving the primary intended users of the evaluation in order to ensure that the findings will be used, not left sitting on a shelf. Due to this focus on specific use, utilization-focused evaluation is highly situational and personal.

Purpose/rationale behind this approach

Utilization-focused evaluation may be seen as a reaction to program evaluations that have no real effect on program decisions or implementations. Because the reasons for this lack of use vary from poor evaluation design to political and power issues, utilization-focused evaluation’s aim is to overcome these barriers and make findings usable. The main purpose of this approach is always to impact a program, not to advance basic research or fulfill evaluation mandates.

Key roles of the players in this approach

The primary intended users of the evaluation findings (the most important players): they determine the (a) purpose of the program evaluation, (b) the criteria to be used in the evaluation, and (c) the methods to be employed.

The evaluator is a facilitator of this process who: (a) works to engender commitment to both the evaluation and its use by the intended users, (b) who suggests a framework for the evaluation, and (c) who then facilitates the evaluation process. They may be external or internal evaluators and are subject to the usual advantages and disadvantages (objectivity, credibility, and so forth) of external versus internal evaluation. Whether internal or external, the evaluator in this approach is still the accountable party for the accuracy, feasibility, and propriety of the evaluation.

Process for conducting this approach

1. Conduct a stakeholder analysis: identify interests and commitments of potential users and then determine the primary intended users;
2. Negotiate a process to involve primary intended users in evaluation decisions;

3. Determine the primary purposes and intended uses of evaluation (judgment, improvement, knowledge, process use) and then focus by prioritizing evaluation questions and issues;
4. Simulate use with potential findings and identify any further questions and issues;
5. Make design and measurement decisions (check for quality of decisions based on evaluation standards; e.g., validity, practicality, ethics, appropriateness);
6. Collect data;
7. Organize data to be understandable to all users;
8. Actively involve users in interpreting findings;
9. Facilitate intended use by intended users;
10. Disseminate findings to potential users and any other appropriate groups; and
11. End by evaluating the evaluation.

Values, premises, & characteristics associated with this approach

Premises of utilization-focused evaluation:

- Commitment to intended use should be the driving force in an evaluation.
- Strategizing about use is ongoing and continuous from the very beginning of the evaluation.
- The “personal factor” contributes significantly.
- Careful and thoughtful stakeholder analysis should inform identification of primary intended users.
- Useful evaluations must be designed and adapted situationally.
- Intended users’ commitment to use can be nurtured and enhanced by actively involving them in making significant decisions in the evaluation.
- High-quality participation is the goal, not high-quantity participation.
- High-quality involvement of intended users will result in high-quality, useful evaluations.
- Evaluators have a rightful stake in an evaluation in that their credibility and integrity are always at risk.
- Evaluators committed to enhancing use have a responsibility to train users in evaluation processes.
- Use is different from reporting and disseminating.

Common factors that facilitate use of this approach

- *Maximize the personal factor.*
- *Recognize that intended use is not abstract but concerns how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and experience the evaluation process.*
- *Remember that people, not organizations, use evaluations; so, identify specific people who will be users.*
- *Develop strong, working relationships between evaluator and intended users.*

Common factors that inhibit use of this approach

- *Evaluators make themselves the primary decision-makers.*
- *Passive, vague audiences are identified as users instead of real people.*
- *Organizations (e.g., the feds) are targeted as users, not specific people.*
- *Decisions are focused upon, not decision-makers.*
- *The evaluation’s funder is automatically assumed to be the primary stakeholder.*
- *Waiting for findings before identifying intended users and uses.*
- *Taking stance of standing above the fray of people and politics.*
- *Intended users are identified at outset, but ignored until final report.*

