Participatory evaluation in practice: Challenges and early lessons with an Aboriginal-community run centre

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Outline

◆ Background
  ❖ The program: Tirkandi Inaburra – aims & description
  ❖ Monitoring & evaluation– aims, challenges

◆ Participatory evaluation
  ❖ Levels of participation
  ❖ Processes of participation
  ❖ Benefits & impacts on methods
  ❖ Challenges

◆ Results

◆ Conclusion – ingredients for success
Background – Tirkandi Inaburra Program

- History
- Aims
- Description
Background – Monitoring and Evaluation

◆ Aims
  - Assist development of monitoring tools
  - Conduct outcomes study

◆ Challenges
  - Geographic distance
  - Budget
  - Culturally appropriate methods and instruments
  - Sustainable methods and instruments
  - ‘Informed’ consent with low literacy levels & distance
  - Multiple program effects vs burden of data collection
Questions

◆ Would participatory approach be an effective means to deal with these challenges, given geographic distance?

◆ Will participatory research interfere with probity and objectivity of evaluation?
## Participatory evaluation: Levels of participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of participation</th>
<th>Why org’ns are interested in it</th>
<th>Why people participate in it</th>
<th>What it is intended for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominal</td>
<td>Legitimation</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Participation in return for a benefit</td>
<td>Means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Leverage</td>
<td>Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformative</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Means/Ends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Newland 2007; White 1996
Participatory evaluation: Processes

◆ Workshops and meetings:
  ◆ TI Board
  ◆ TI Management
  ◆ TI staff
  ◆ Funding body
  ◆ Research Consortium
◆ Emails and phone calls
◆ TI staff as data collectors
Participatory evaluation: Benefits & impacts

- Identification of important domains for measurement
- Wording and order of questions
- Obtaining informed consent
- Data collection
- Priming participants for follow up
- Tirkandi Inaburra able to monitor themselves
- Tirkandi Inaburra will better understand the report when it is released, more receptive to report as a tool for improvement
Participatory evaluation: Challenges

◆ Time consuming, particularly ethics
◆ Distance – hinders ability to meet, have meaningful conversations & develop relationships
◆ Managing multiple ideas and perspectives
◆ Willingness to work together
◆ Capacity of program staff to engage in evaluation:
  ▶ Experience/knowledge
  ▶ Time - Day to day crises
◆ Ensuring stakeholder representativeness
◆ Ensuring probity, particularly with limited human resources
Results – early findings

- Pilot only n=6
- Data indicated change in boys’ opinions
- Some results not reflecting what TI staff were seeing (eg ‘goals’) so changes to qre made to better reflect what responses actually meant. Changes made in participation with consortium, program and funding body (ensure probity)
QUESTION: Would participatory approach be an effective means to deal with these challenges, given geographic distance?

ANSWER: Yes - Participatory approach enabled an ambitious evaluation with a modest budget

Key ingredients for success:

- Mutual respect
- Willingness to work together
- Support of funding body for participatory approach
- Common concern for plight of Indigenous youth
Conclusion

QUESTION: Will participatory research interfere with probity or objectivity of evaluation?

ANSWER: No

Key ingredients for success:

- Involvement of funding body in participatory approach – they have a stake in finding out ‘the truth’
- Incentives for consortium – academic careers depend upon quality research
- Incentives for Tirkandi Inaburra management – reputation of evaluation important for future funding
Questions?