

Quotes on Evaluation Use

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Making the Most of Evaluation

By Mark Cabaj

Ever since the field of formal evaluation began to grow dramatically in the early 1950s, it is has always been a challenge to make sure evaluation processes and results were used by their intended users in thinking about, evaluating and making decisions about their work.

As early as the 1960s, people reviewing evaluation use reported a 'dearth' of examples where evaluation informed policy (Williams and Evans 1969), "a general failure" to use evaluation (Wholey et al. 1970), and that the influence of social science research and evaluation on program decisions was "with few exceptions, nil" (Deitchman 1976). In 1975, Alkin, a celebrated educational researcher published the provocative article, "Evaluation: Who Needs It? Who Cares?" (Alkin 1975).

Things hardly appeared to have improved over the last forty years. In 2005, an Evaluation Gap Working Group found few rigorous evaluation studies of the thirty four billion dollars spent on foreign assistance that year (Patton 2008). A recent study by Quebec researchers found few government officials made regular use of social science research and evaluation in their decisions (Landry 2003).

Reminiscent of Alkin's 'Who Cares?' article, two frustrated senior administrators and policy advisors wrote an article entitled "Why Measure: Nonprofits use metrics to show that they are efficient, but what if donors don't care?" (Cunningham and Ricks 2004).

Sources

The following sources were cited in Michael Quinn Patton's 2008 edition of *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications).

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Other Sources Include

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