

Measuring Qualitative Outcomes

*Part of self-evaluation support to
Health Challenge Wales Voluntary
Sector Grant Recipients*

Sioned Lewis

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Agenda

- (a) Background to my role
- (b) Qualitative Research
- (c) Focus on case studies
- (d) Q&A and link to national Children in Wales Child Safety project
- Coffee break
Group discussion

Self Evaluation Support

Principal role:

- provide **advice, guidance and support** to the five organisations with the **self evaluation** of projects.

As part of that role we will also look to,

- identify and share examples of **good practice**
- offer **practical assistance** with evaluation methods, data collection, analysis, presentation etc.

My role

Independent from Health Challenge Wales /
Assembly

Contracted by the Assembly

Won't be carrying out an evaluation, projects
report on themselves

Always available to answer any queries about
self-evaluation

What are Outcomes?

Definition(s)

- **Dictionary:** *-noun 1. a final product or end result; consequence; issue.*
- **"The longer-term impact, usually expressed in terms of broad socio-economic consequences, which can be attributed to an intervention (e.g. a reduction in the number of long-term unemployed)"**

European Commission (2004) Evaluating EU Activities: A Practical Guide. Also UK Evaluation Society

How to use outcomes

- **Why measure outcomes?**
- Evidence for evaluation, but then what...?

- **What evidence?**
- Quantitative
- Qualitative

Outcomes for Evaluation

Why Evaluate?

“to achieve a **clear understanding** of what we’re doing and how well we’re doing it”

“to find out what **lessons** can be learned as projects progress”

“to determine **what can be done better** and more effectively”

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative Methods involve

- capturing and describing naturally occurring data in their real-life context;
- a concern with social life as it is experienced by people;
- an in-depth understanding of social action

→ **why, how, and under what conditions** projects work or fail to work. .

Methods

Method	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
Questionnaires and surveys	When you need information quickly and/or easily from a large group of people in a non-threatening manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- can be completed anonymously.- inexpensive to administer.- easy to compare and analyse.- can capture large sample and get lots of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- might not provide careful feedback.- difficult to design.- impersonal.- surveys may need sampling expert.- doesn't get full story.
In-depth Interviews	When you want to understand fully someone's impressions or experiences or learn more about their answers to questionnaires.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- can cover full range and depth of information- develops relationship with client- can be flexible, depending on pupil	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- time consuming.- can be hard to analyse and compare.- can be costly.- interviewer can bias pupil's responses.

Methods cont'd

Documentation review

When you want an impression of how a project operates without interrupting the project.

- provides comprehensive and historical information.
- doesn't interrupt project or client's routine in project.
- information already exists.
- few biases about information.

- often time consuming.
- information is likely to be incomplete.
- need to be quite clear about what you are looking for.
- it is not a flexible means of gathering data; data restricted to what already exists.

Observation

When you want to gather accurate information about how a project actually operates from day to day, particularly about the processes within it.

- views on the operations of a project as they are actually occurring.
- can adapt to events as they occur.
- records observations as they happen which would otherwise be forgotten

- can be difficult to interpret seen behaviour.
- can be complex to categorise observations.
- can influence behaviours of project participants.

Methods cont'd

Focus groups

When you want to explore a topic in depth through group discussion, e.g. about reactions to an experience or suggestion, understanding common complaints.

- get common impressions quickly and reliably
- way to gain a good range and depth of information in a short time.
- convey key information about projects.

- hard to analyse responses.
- need good facilitator
- finding the time in the school day to arrange the group.

Case studies

When you want to understand situations in depth or depict pupils' experiences in a project, and conduct comprehensive examination through cross comparison of cases.

- depicts fully the experience in project input, process and results.
- powerful means to portray project to outsiders.

- usually quite time-consuming to collect, organise and describe.
- represents depth of information, rather than breadth.

Action Research

[A cycle of planning, teaching/acting; observing & reflecting that integrates action and research]

A method of incorporating self-evaluation into everyday activities rather than a tool in itself.

- allows possible improvements to be spotted and implemented immediately

- can be difficult to remove yourself from the action and be truly reflective

Case Study

- Aim for a **holistic understanding** of the change in behaviour, or an action etc
- Getting started
 - Plan!
 - What does a case study look like (overview; methods, questions etc)
 - How to choose your case studies (can't 'sample' but select cases to maximise lessons to be learned)
 - Focus (usually one or two issues, but several perspectives)
 - Key Questions ("how" and "why")
 - Methods (selection based on time and access. Quantitative can also be used; could use physical evidence – eg a stair-gate in use)

Key Messages

- Not alone:
 - Many projects face similar challenges in collecting evidence
 - Qualitative methods inform evaluations at all levels: small scale projects through to European-funded international projects
 - Established methods, widely used
- Children in Wales' Health Challenge Wales funded project using methods at a national level.

Contact Details

Diolch

Sioned Lewis

Arad Consulting

Enterprise House

126 Bute Street

Cardiff CF10 5LE

sioned@aradconsulting.com

Tel: 029 2044 0552

