

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to give an introduction and overview to document analysis in program evaluation. One of the central features of history is document analysis, so a discussion of document analysis and history is given. Next, the advantages and disadvantages of document analysis are discussed. Following this, tracking, content analysis, and case study aggregation analysis are described. Next, rules of precedence for choosing documents are given. Then the subject of credibility of documents is taken up. Following this, a discussion of what documents might be available to the evaluator is given. Finally, the process of finding documents is described, and examples of document analysis are given.

What is document analysis and how does one do it? The aim of document analysis is to gather facts. For example, the brochure of a program could be examined by the evaluator to answer the question of what are the 'official' aims and objectives of the program. Usually the documents are analyzed with some question or hypothesis in mind or with some general idea of what one is looking for. Document analysis involves the selection of facts from documents and these questions, hypotheses or general ideas act as selection devices for facts and give rise to the interpretations gleaned from the document analysis. Evaluation involves the interpretation of facts and document analysis is one of the methods of data analysis that leads to interpretation.

Why, when, and under what conditions does one do document analysis? Document analysis is superior for finding out retrospective information about a program and may be the only way that certain information may be obtainable. Document analysis does not involve the necessity of collecting new data and it thus saves time and cost. While document analysis can be done at any time during an evaluation, it is particularly useful at the beginning when the evaluator is trying to understand why the program is the way it is. Documents are an excellent source for the purposes, rationale, and history of a program. Doing document analysis is usually a useful prelude to collecting new data. Knowing the purposes of a program helps the evaluator decide what data are to be collected. Doing document analysis one finds out which data have already been collected and what new data need to be collected.

Why is document analysis of concern in evaluation? The reason is that most evaluations of programs examine documents generated by the programs. The importance of these documents is little appreciated and their usefulness is too underrated. It is suggested that there be a more systematic search for and analysis of documents. The advantages of document analysis are given in a succeeding section.

What is the purpose of this paper? The purpose of this paper is to give an introduction and overview to document analysis since it has rarely been discussed in the literature. One of the central features of history is document analysis, so a discussion of document analysis and history is given. Next, the advantages and disadvantages of document analysis are discussed. Following this, tracking, content analysis and case study aggregation analysis are described. Next, rules of precedence for choosing documents are given. Then the subject of credibility of documents is taken up. Following this, a discussion of what documents might be available for the evaluator is given. Finally, the process of finding documents is described, and examples of document analysis are given.

History and Document Analysis

The word document has been used by historians in several senses. On the one hand, it is sometimes used to mean a written source of historical information as contrasted with oral testimony or with artifacts, pictorial survivals, and archeological remains. On the other hand, it is sometimes reserved for only official and state papers such as treaties, laws, grants, deeds, etc. Still another sense is contained in the word 'documentation', which, as used by the historian, among others, signifies any process of proof based upon any kind of source whether written, oral, pictorial or archeological (Gottschalk, 1969). In this paper the word 'document' will be employed in the last and most comprehensive meaning, which is etymologically correct. Thus 'document' becomes synonymous with source, whether written or not, official or not, primary or not. Document analysis is the analysis of documents in order to gather facts.

The study of history went through a stage when it was regarded that documented facts alone is all that is wanted. The Positivists, anxious to claim that history was a science, contributed the weight of their influence to this cult of facts. First ascertain the facts, said the positivists, then draw your conclusions from them. A fact was regarded as a datum of experience as distinct from conclusions. First get your facts straight then plunge into the shifting sands of interpretation. This notion has problems with it. Not all facts are historical facts, just as not all facts are evaluative facts. For example, in the evaluation of a program, school achievement scores are probably an evaluative fact whereas the average age of teachers are probably not. In other words, not all the facts about a program are evaluative facts. Thus the evaluator, as does the historian, selects facts on the basis of some a priori interpretation. That is, before the evaluator examines the facts, he must have some idea what he is looking for. Thus, if a fact is selected there must have been some judgements passed on it. Facts do not speak for themselves, they have to be spoken for. Barraclough (1955) writes: '... the history we read, though based on facts, is, strictly speaking, not factual at all, but a series of accepted judgements' (p.14). This is true not only of history but also of evaluation. History means interpretation. Evaluation means interpretation. Facts do not speak for themselves. Facts have still to be processed by the historian or the evaluator before he or she can make any use of them.

The facts of history and evaluation never come to us 'pure', since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form; they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder (Carr, 1961). Thus the facts we find in documents have been selected by the recorder. Our concern should be with the selective device through which the facts were churned; what facts were selected to be written down and which were rejected?

Advantages of Document Analysis

1. Document analysis is superior to interviewing for collecting some kinds of retrospective data.
 - (a) Interviewing depends on the interviewer knowing the right questions to reveal the relevant information. Analysis of documents can indicate questions to ask in an interview. For example, documents may reveal low school attendance, suggesting a potential dropout problem which could be asked about in an interview.
 - (b) Interviewing relies on the memory of the interviewer while document analysis is not subject to this defect. Document analysis may provide more detail on the chronology of events than interviewing.
 - (c) Document analysis may reveal information that could not be obtained through interviewing. For example, to demonstrate that the time spent on writing was decreasing in schools, an evaluator found documents indicating the declining sale of lined paper to schools and the increasing sale of ditto paper (Murphy, 1980). Another researcher, demonstrating Irish domination in the Boston public schools, identified Irish surnames on a list of employees.
2. Certain kinds of information are most efficiently collected by means of document analysis. Very often the evaluator needs to know what are the stated goals of a program. Documents are a source of such information. Rather than wasting the time of program personnel, general background information might be obtained from documents. Background documents might supply information on lines of authority within the program, a list of staff, basic statistics and issues related to the program. If information is needed on the professional opinion on program-related issues, professional journals can be consulted.
3. Information obtained from documents is often more credible than information obtained via observation and interviewing. A quote taken from an internal memorandum is not subject to the evaluator's bias as are interviewing and observational data.
4. Document analysis may be the only way that certain information may be obtainable. Some program personnel may be unwilling to be interviewed. Program personnel may be unco-operative in supplying certain information.
5. Documents are convenient to use. With interviewing, the evaluator must make appointments and establish rapport. None of this is necessary with documents which can be worked with at any time. The gathering

of information from documents does not require the co-operation of the individuals about whom information is being sought, as does the use of questionnaires, interviews and, frequently, observation.

6. Documents are often available on a no-cost or low-cost basis.
7. Documents are non-reactive. Although there may be substantial errors in the document, it is not usual to find masking or sensitivity because the producer knows he or she is being studied by some social scientist. This gain by itself makes the use of documents attractive if one wants to compensate for the reactivity which riddles the interview and the questionnaire (Webb, et al., 1966).
8. Records save time and money that original data collection requires.
9. Unlike the one-shot evaluation study that collects information for a short period of time and then closes shop, the record keeping system of an agency can provide continual feed-in of information (Weiss, 1972). Statistical records contain information that is collected repeatedly and make possible the determination of trends over time.
10. Documents '... constitute a legally unassailable base from which to defend oneself against allegations, misinterpretations, and libel. The best defense in a challenge to an evaluation report is for the evaluator to be able to show that he did in fact tell the truth, and the best evidence for truth is the public record' (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p.232).
11. Program documents provide the evaluator with information about many things that cannot be observed because they may have taken place before the evaluation was begun and because they may include private interchanges to which the evaluator is not directly privy (Patton, 1980).

Disadvantages of Document Analysis

1. Often documents are written to make a program look good and thus can be misleading. There is also sometimes self-deception on the part of the writer of a document.
2. A document is a written report and can have some of the same faults as an oral report given in an interview. There is a dependency on the memory of the person doing the reporting. The writer of a report may be guided by predispositions or be a poor observer. However, with a document one can write, 'why?' in the margin but one cannot cross-examine as one can do with an interview. In an interview, one can size up the reliability of the person giving the report.
3. ... although reams of material may be available, it will often not contain much of the needed information or be sufficiently detailed. In Connecticut, for example, legislative analysts conducting a student aid evaluation found piles of reports, but they did not contain such crucial information as how 6,000 students were chosen for aid out of 30,000 applicants, or what happened to those not receiving aid. If you are interested in internal processes and decision-making procedures, such data will usually not be available (Murphy, 1980, p.123)
4. Documents may reflect clerical lapses, typographical errors, biases, or outright deception.
5. Agency records may be inaccurate, out of date, or months behind on entries.
6. The definitions and categories used by an agency's records may be inappropriate for evaluation purposes. For example, Hendrickson and Barber (1980) describe an evaluation of a program where the program had no written set of definitions explaining how to define the data categories used in the program and new staff hired received no training in the collection or reporting of data.

It was not surprising that substantial differences existed among program staff in how data were reported. For example, the self-evaluation claimed that 118,000 'youth contacts' had been made during 1977-1978 by the program. School staff had different conceptions of what a 'youth contact' was. For example, assume 10 adults and 200 kids attended a Fun Fair at a school; some staff reported 200 'youth contacts' and others reported 10 times 200 contacts, 2,000, reasoning that the adults were volunteers and each adult has 200 contacts. Evaluators concluded that at least 35,000 claimed 'youth contacts' were unverifiable (p.774).

7. No document can indicate more than what the author of the document thought -- what he thought had happened, what he thought ought to happen or would happen, or perhaps only what he wanted others to think he thought (Carr, 1961). Documentary facts never come 'pure' since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form. They are always refracted through the mind of the recorder. It follows that when we take up a document, the first concern should be not with the facts which it contains but with the writer of the document. Ideally one should study the writer before studying the facts presented by the document.
8. Documents may provide unrepresentative samples. There is no easy remedy to this other than information obtained from documents should be checked with the information obtained by other methods of data collection.

Tracking

Tracking is a process of working through documents looking for information that will confirm some hypothesis. This is what historians do and the historian can be regarded as a detective (Winks, 1969). Tracking is also one of the central features of investigative reporting. While anthropologists, historians, and legal analysts do tracking, it has best been described in relation to investigative journalism. Williams (1978) describes the reasoning of a veteran reporter.

The veteran has ingrained within himself a special style of reasoning. He knows how things normally work. If he observes a phenomenon, an effect, he wonders what caused it. He develops a hypothesis and begins checking it against observable facts. He works to back up the chain of facts, searching for information that will either support or negate his hypothesis. (p.13)

Tracking is based on the notion that the actions of persons leave tracks in records and documents. If the evaluator knows how things work, and if the evaluator suspects that a certain action has occurred, the evaluator can imagine what tracks must be left and then look for them. It is the knowledge of how things work normally that is important, since the evaluator can deduce what tracks must have been left if his hypothesis is true. Tracking has three steps to it.

1. Establish a hypothesis about the subject of interest.
2. Decide what tracks must be left in documents if the hypothesis is true.
3. Check the implied documents to see if the hypothesis is true or not.

Guba (Note 1) gives the following hypothetical example. It is hypothesized

that the motivation of pupils to read historical novels has been increased because of the teacher's method of having the class act out segments of such novels in full dress of the period. That assertion can be checked by looking at existing library withdrawal records, records of sales of books at the local bookstore, etc. (p.15).

The reasoning is as follows. The hypothesis formed is that the pupils have been motivated to read because of the teacher's instruction. If the hypothesis is true, then the students must have taken more books out of the library than normally. Hence, check the library withdrawal records to see if the hypothesis is true or not. Guba (Note 1) gives two other examples

It is asserted that a certain instructional outcome has occurred because of the serrendipitous introduction of certain unplanned teaching techniques. The existence of these techniques and their impact on day-to-day instruction can be at least partially assessed by consulting lesson plans that teachers are required to file. (p.15)

It is asserted that evaluation reports have systematically 'turned off' certain parent groups in the community. Some insight into the truth of this allegation may be gained by searching minutes and newspaper accounts of recent PTA meetings at which these reports were disseminated. (p.15)

Content Analysis

Holsti (1969) defines content analysis as the application of scientific methods to documentary evidence. Content analysis is said to have objectivity, be systematic and have generality. To have objectivity, the analysis must be carried out on the basis of explicitly formulated rules which will enable two or more persons to obtain the same results from the same documents. To be systematic, material is consistently included or excluded on the basis of rules. By generality is meant that the findings must have theoretical relevance. Quantification is usually considered to be one of the most important characteristics of content analysis. Content analysis uses certain controls to make it systematic and objective. These controls are as follows:

- (i) The categories of analysis used to classify the content are clearly and explicitly defined so

that other individuals can apply them to the same content to verify the same conclusions.

- (ii) Analysts are not free to select and report merely what strikes them as interesting, but must methodically classify all the relevant material in their samples.
- (iii) Some quantitative procedure is used in order to provide a measure of the importance and emphasis in the material of the various ideas found and to permit comparison with other samples of material (Sellitz, Wrightsman and Cook, 1976).

In evaluation, content analysis has been used to analyze open-ended questions in questionnaires. First one decides on a sampling plan. If the evaluator feels that he or she has the time, the evaluator may decide to analyze all of the questionnaires. However, if the number of questionnaires is large, the evaluator might draw a random sample of questionnaires, say, every second, every third or every fifth questionnaire. If it is appropriate, one may quantify by counting the number of answers expressing favourable, unfavourable, and neutral attitudes. Alternatively, one may quantify by going through 30 or 40 questionnaires forming a category system in order to classify the answers to an open-ended question. By going through all questionnaires or a sample of questionnaires one can count the number of answers falling under each category of the category system which has been devised. Consider an example. The following question appeared in a questionnaire of a study of an artist-in-residence program:

Did you find any personal barriers to making effective use of the Artists-in-Residence?

Yes _____ No _____

If Yes, please explain.

The answers to the 'please explain' part were found to be classifiable under three categories - 'shyness, hard to get to know artist', 'not being able to attend introductory or early meetings with the artist', and 'a negative reaction to the clique which formed about each artist'.

Reliability of classification is a problem with content analysis. Ideally, the system of classification used should be so clearly defined that different judges would arrive at exactly the same results when analyzing the same material. The primary method of increasing reliability of classification is to specify clearly the characteristics of statements that are to be placed in a given category, and to use many examples drawn from the material being analyzed to illustrate what kinds of statements are to be considered as belonging in a single category (Sellitz, Wrightsman and Cook, 1976). This discussion of content analysis has been extremely brief. The book by Holsti (1969) gives a comprehensive discussion of content analysis.

One major form of content analysis is the determination of the readability of written materials. Important factors which influence the readability of any printed material include (1) the average number of words in sentences, (2) the number of commonly understood words, (3) the number of long complex sentences, (4) the number of abstract ideas, and (5) the use of personal pronouns. A number of readability formulas have been developed for estimating the readability of passages. Estimating the readability of documents is an example of document analysis. An introduction to readability and a list of references is provided by Burmeister (1974).

Case Study Aggregation Analysis

The case-study aggregation method is a means for aggregating 'diverse case studies together under a common conceptual framework so that findings will be cumulative ... to identify what it is we already 'know', what it is we do not know, and what it is that we suspect' (Lucas 1974b, p.1). Lucas takes a broad view of what is meant by case study and includes any description or evaluative analysis of a common social unit, a local program, or an agency. Lucas includes in this category 'clinical studies of individuals, administrative studies of organizations, anthropological reports on primitive societies' (Lucas, 1974a, p.8) and evaluation reports. The method has the capacity 'to integrate the findings of diverse studies about organizations and programs. It is more flexible in that many different types of studies using different measurement techniques can be brought together, and new concepts can be developed and considered that none of the original research ever addressed' (Lucas, 1974a, p.12). As long as they are descriptive of some common social unit (e.g. a dozen sites where a common curriculum is being used), the case studies can be highly dissimilar from one another. Case-study aggregation analysis is a form of document analysis that is not discussed in detail in this paper. The reader is referred to Lucas (1974a, 1974b) and to Guba and Lincoln (1981).

Rules of Precedence for Choosing Documents

There are four general rules for deciding why one document should be given precedence over another.

1. Incomplete observation and faulty memory are reasons for inadequacy of testimony. The longer the time interval between the incident described and the writing of the document, the less reliable the document. Therefore, choose the document that is closer to the event described.
2. Some documents were intended as aids to one's memory, some are reports to others, some as apologies, some as propaganda, and so on. So documents differ as to their purpose. The more serious the writer's intention to make a mere record, the more dependable the document is.
3. The more confidential the document (i.e. the fewer eyes that are allowed to see it), the more 'naked' is the truth revealed by the document.
4. The testimony of a schooled or experienced observer and reporter is generally superior to that of the untrained and casual observer and reporter. Thus, the greater the expertness of the author in the matter he or she is reporting, the more reliable the report.

Credibility

In examining documents, the evaluator must separate the credible from the incredible. The general reliability of an author has significance only for establishing the probable credibility of his particular statements. For each particular of a document the process of establishing credibility should be separately undertaken regardless of the general credibility of the author. Any detail of a document that passes all four of the following tests is credible evidence (Gottschalk, 1969).

- (i) Was the ultimate source of the detail (the primary witness) able to tell the truth?
- (ii) Was the primary witness willing to tell the truth?
- (iii) Is the primary witness accurately reported with regard to the detail under examination?
- (iv) Is there any independent corroboration of the detail under examination? This refers to the concept of triangulation that is frequently encountered in sociology and anthropology literature, and in that psychological literature concerned with non-experimental studies. Triangulation is a process of comparing and contrasting information drawn from different sources, and/or determined by different methodologies. Thus information can be cross-referenced from a number of different documents. Alternatively, information obtained from documents can be compared with information obtained by other methodologies such as interviewing, observation, and questionnaire.

Gottschalk (1969) indicates that the general rule of historians 'is to accept as historical only those particulars which rest upon the independent testimony of two or more reliable witnesses' (p.166). It is important that witnesses be independent.

Where any two witnesses agree, it may be that they do so because they are testifying independently to an observed fact, but it is possible that they agree only because one has copied from the other, or because one has been unduly influenced by the other or because both have copied from or been unduly influenced by a third source. Unless the independence of the observers is established, agreement may be confirmation of a lie or a mistake rather than corroboration of a fact (Gottschalk, 1969, p.167).

A number of points can be made about the first of these credibility tests: ability to tell the truth.

- (a) Ability to tell the truth rests on the witness's nearness to the event. Nearness to the event can be geographical or chronological. With regard to historical testimony, Gottschalk (1969) states:

The reliability of the witness's testimony tends to vary in proportion to (a) his own remoteness from the event in time and space, and (b) the remoteness from the event in time and space of his recording of it. There are three steps in historical testimony: observation, recollection, and recording (not to mention the historian's own perception of the witness's record). At each of these steps something of the possible testimony may be lost. Geographical as well as chronological closeness to the event affects all three steps and helps to determine both how much will be lost and the accuracy of what is retained (p.151).

- (b) Though witnesses might be equally close to an event, they will not all be equally competent. Competency depends upon such factors as age, education, degree of expertness, mental and physical health, memory, etc.
- (c) Ability to tell the truth is determined by the witness's degree of attention to the event described.
- (d) The ability to tell the truth is affected by whether the question is a leading one or not. Such questions, by implying the expected answer, make it difficult to tell the whole truth.
- (e) The ability to tell the truth is affected by the point of view of the writer of a document. It has been contended that one of the reasons why religious problems and events receive so much attention in the history of the Middle Ages is that its principal sources were written by clergymen. If persons from other occupations had written the history they may have asked and answered different kinds of questions and given an entirely different picture of medieval life.
- (f) The observer's ability to tell the truth is difficult because of the observer's egocentricism. An observer of an event will inevitably write what he or she heard and he or she did as if these were the most important things that were said and done.

Some authors of documents, though otherwise competent to tell the truth, consciously or unconsciously tell falsehoods. The following are some conditions that tend toward untruthfulness.

- (a) Caution must be exercised when testimony is given by an interested witness. This occurs when the witness may benefit from the perversion of truth or may benefit someone or some cause dear to himself or herself. The brochure describing an educational program falls into this category.
- (b) Often the benefit to be derived from a perversion of the truth is subtle and may not be realized by the witness himself (Gottschalk, 1969). In such a case, the cause is probably bias. It becomes important to know something of the witness's religious, political, social, economic, racial, national, regional, local, family, personal, and other ties.
- (c) The desire to please or to displease may lead to the colouring or the avoidance of the truth. An example is speakers at rallies or banquets.
- (d) Literary style sometimes dictates the sacrifice of truth. For example, narrators and reporters seek to appear omniscient rather than to use the less vigorous word, the less striking phrase, the if and buts, and the there-is-some-reason-to-believe.
- (e) Sometimes laws and conventions oblige witnesses to depart from strict truths. For example, the same laws of libel and of good taste that have encouraged the hiding of the 'resemblance to persons now living or dead' in fiction and movies have precluded complete accuracy in some historical documents.

There are certain conditions which are favourable to truthfulness. They are frequently the opposite of the conditions that create an inability or an unwillingness to tell the truth.

- (a) A witness is likely to be truthful when the purport of a statement is a matter of indifference to the witness.
- (b) A witness is likely to be truthful when a statement he or she makes is prejudicial to him, his dear ones, or his causes.
- (c) When facts are so well known, so much matters of common knowledge, the witness would be unlikely to be mistaken or to lie about them. Examples of such facts are whether it rained last night, that the President was shot at last Tuesday, and so on.
- (d) Even when the fact in question may not be well known, certain kinds of statements are both incidental and probable to such a degree that error or falsehood seems unlikely (Gottschalk, 1969).

Take the statement: "He is an absolutely outstanding teacher of Grade 6." Without further corroboration, it may be doubted that he is an absolutely outstanding teacher, but it is highly probable that he is a teacher of Grade 6.

- (e) Statements have a high degree of credibility when the thought patterns and preconceptions of a witness are known and yet the witness says something out of keeping with them. The following statements are likely to be truthful. A capitalist observer gives instances of the loyalty of Soviet school children to their country. A Soviet observer makes a statement regarding instances of working-class contentment in a capitalist country.

Documents Available

Williams (1978) indicates that the first and great commandment of investigative reporting is this: get the record. While records do not assume such importance in educational evaluation, they could be used much more than they are. The following is a list of documents found in schools that might be useful sources of information. It is not expected that it is complete. Some schools may not have some of the documents listed, while other schools may have documents that are not listed. The purpose of the list is to help the evaluator think about possible sources of information.

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| I. Student Records | II. Curriculum Records | III. Teacher Records |
| a. Attendance | a. Lists of aims and objectives | a. Teacher certification |
| b. Achievement (test results, honours, scholarships, grades completed) | b. Descriptions of course content | b. Teacher employment |
| c. Discipline | c. Book lists | c. Teacher evaluation |
| d. Class lists | d. Lesson plans | |
| | e. Minutes of curriculum committees | |
| IV. General Administrative | V. Other | |
| a. Budget and finance | a. Library withdrawal records | |
| b. Purchasing | b. School magazine or paper | |
| c. Food service | c. Local newspaper | |
| d. Building operations | d. Descriptions of programs in public handouts and brochures | |
| e. Insurance and other contracts | e. Minutes of meetings of PTA | |
| f. Transportation:
Contracts with bus firms
Bus inspections, maintenance and safety. | f. Individual education plans for handicapped children | |

The following excerpt taken from a compensatory education evaluation (Joint Committee on Education, 1975) illustrates the wide diversity of documents consulted by the evaluators:

On these visits to (local school districts) we examined ... project descriptions, program evaluations, application forms, newsletters, class lists, staff assignment documents ... In addition, we examined a variety of other material including data on compensatory education programs in other states, HEW audit reports ... (Federal) regulations and guidelines, analyses of other compensatory education programs, and various other documents that held out the possibility of providing a helpful perspective on ... (the program). (p.61)

Federal documents can be a useful source of information as illustrated by the above quote. This is especially true if the program being evaluated is a Federally supported program. Murphy (1978) gives examples of Federal, State, and local government documents that might be consulted.

Every government program maintains records and produces reports about its origin, history, operation and impact; these are an important source of documentary evidence. For one thing, they set forth the legal basis for the program. You should collect copies of the law, rules, regulations, guidelines, and legal interpretations. In addition, program documents (for example, annual reports, financial statements, program brochures, newsletters, budget justifications) provide general background material as well as project the images that officials would like others to view. These documents, prepared primarily for public consumption, are usually accurate on basic facts, but are uncritical of program practices. (p.123)

If they can be obtained, documents on the inner workings of programs can be useful. Such documents include minutes of meetings, organizational charts, staff reports, personnel actions, draft budget documents and memoranda. Internal documents more realistically portray a program than public relations handouts. Memoranda are a particularly rich source of information since this is the primary means of communication for program personnel. Memoranda reveal the information on which decisions are made, the arguments for such decisions, and who was particularly influential in making the decisions. Distribution lists of memoranda show who is important in making decisions and thus who might be interviewed for further information.

Books, journal articles, magazines and other library material may provide useful information. These publications may give the evaluator professional opinion on the subject area addressed by the program being evaluated. The literature might reveal discussions of similar programs and possibly their evaluation. It is often useful to ask the librarian to do a computer search of data bases, there being over 200 commercially available. Some relevant, commonly used data bases are: Educational Resources Information Resources (ERIC), Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), Psychological Abstracts, and Sociological Abstracts. Here document analysis is nothing other than a traditional literature search.

The mass media can be a useful source of information. If an educational program is innovative it is quite likely to be reported in the local press. If an educational program is controversial, pro and con articles or letters to the editor have probably appeared in the local press. The local press may present views of a program that the evaluator has not encountered.

Persons connected with a program may keep personal records of the program and these may be a rich source of data. These documents might include personal correspondence, notes on meetings, memoranda, field notes, and scrapbooks of newspapers clippings. It is often difficult to gain access to these personal records, but if access is gained, personal records can provide revealing contrasts to documents prepared for public consumption. The most distinctive characteristic of personal documents is that they permit us to see other people as they see themselves (Sellitz, Wrightsman and Cook, 1976). Even with personal documents there may be misrepresentation. All personal documents are produced for some purpose. For example letters and memos are written to communicate with someone else. The evaluator using personal documents will do well, whenever possible, to inquire into the motives that induced their production. The use of personal documents has been criticized on the grounds that they are rarely suited for treatment by statistical techniques; that their validity is hardly even beyond doubt; that they can be the result of deception or self-deception; and that they are subject to errors of memory and are at the mercy of passing moods.

Not all documentary evidence comes in the form of the written word as is shown by the Nixon tapes of the White House Oval Office. Examples of this type of documentary evidence include tape recordings, charts, slides, cartoons, photographs, drawings, diagrams and blueprints.

Finding the Documents

The first persons to ask for documents are the personnel connected with the program. It is important at the very beginning of the evaluation to negotiate access to program documents and records. The ideal situation would include access to all routine records on clients, all correspondence to and from program staff, financial and budget records, organizational rules, regulations, memoranda, charts, and any other official or unofficial documents generated by or for the program (Patton, 1980). A friendly secretary or records manager may advise the evaluator on what is in the files and where it is.

At the end of every interview, ask the interviewee if there are any documents that might be read to gain a full picture of the program (Murphy, 1980). Of course, documents themselves lead to other document sources.

A local academician should be up to date on recent publications and might point you to some important documents. A local librarian could help you with various indexes to books and periodicals, or direct you to a bibliography or a reference work. An agency might have collected all the material published on the program. A secretary might describe the agency record-keeping procedures, point to a 'pack rat' with cartons of information stashed away, suggest things to read, or open up files for your inspection. If you don't ask, you may miss a lot of important data. (Murphy, 1980, p.128).

The search for documents is not a random one. There is usually some aim, idea, or hypothesis guiding the search. For example, if the evaluator is doing a cost effectiveness analysis, financial records are important.

If the evaluator is assessing client satisfaction, financial data are less important. There are certain documents that the evaluator will want to read irrespective of what one is specifically searching for. These documents include the statement of the contract, the document specifying aims and what is to be done, interim reports on progress and a final report (if there is one).

Permissions to use and quote from documents might be necessary. This is particularly true if the evaluator is given access to private documents. Distribution of the draft final report allows persons to object to quotes from confidential documents. This brings up the touchy subject of to what extent should the evaluator be censored, a point to be covered in the evaluation contract.

If there are too many documents to read, what does one do? The evaluator uses the art of scanning documents. Rather than reading the full document, one reads abstracts and summaries. Knowing the type of information one is looking for (e.g. financial information) can reduce the number of documents the evaluator needs to read.

Reference Notes

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