GOAL MANAGEMENT AS AN ATTEMPT TO EVALUATE NATURE CONSERVATION CAMPAIGNS

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This paper reviews international approaches to evaluation research and attempts to determine the scope and the efficacy of environmental conservation campaigns in Southern Africa. The purpose is to discuss the need for evaluation of environmental conservation initiatives, to present a model of evaluation and to clarify the methods and approaches that should be developed in order to be effectively evaluated.

INTRODUCTION

One often hears assertions on the nature and role of evaluation research and the importance of conservation and environmental agencies in general and action research particularly. This type of approach seems very logical, but has the disadvantage of possibly being an oversimplification of the reality at hand.

The aim of this paper is:

a) to give an overview of the international state of the art in evaluation research being applied in the field of environmental education (EE).
b) to indicate that qualitative research designs in general, and action research particularly, could be preferable to quantitative research designs when assessing EE campaigns, and
c) to illustrate, through research presently being undertaken by the author, how attempts to evaluate EE related campaigns can be relatively simply and cost effectively accomplished within the Southern African context.

At the outset however it would be appropriate to discuss briefly problems facing people working in the field of EE in Southern Africa. The field of EE in Southern Africa appears to be characterized by a consistent national policy and resulting objectives that are applicable and is therefore clearly subjective to the beholder and is therefore clearly subjective to the beholder and is therefore clearly subjective to the beholder and is therefore clearly subjective to the beholder and is therefore clearly subjective to the beholder and is therefore clearly subjective to the beholder.

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A PROPOSED MODEL FOR EVALUATION RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Action research can be described as an intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such interventions (Halsey, 1972). Other features of this approach are that:

a. It is situationally - it is normally concerned with evaluating a problem within a specific context and in attempting to solve the problems within that context;

b. It is participatory - team members (or staff) take part directly and/or indirectly in the implementation of the research);

c. It is collaborative - researchers and practitioners work together on the project;

d. It is self-evaluation - the programme is continually monitored as a result of evaluation research so that the ultimate aim of improving the programme is somehow or another can be achieved.

The advantages of this type of approach is clearly that it involves a diagnostic stage and a therapeutically stage, as well as a cumulative and generative stage. The practitioner can review the analysis of problems and the resulting hypotheses generated. The practitioner can then look for remedies to rectify shortcomings in his programme. On a wider scale within the specific context of EE practitioners can start working on the interrelations concerning conservation behaviour and environmental ethics, as well as developing a new generation of environmentally aware individuals on a preventative level.

The question that now arises is how the procedure for action research can be applied. The procedure should be followed in eight stages as it should apply to environmental extension.

Stage 1

Identification

The problems and needs of the organization involved in EE should be clearly identified during this stage. These issues should be expressed as concretely as possible.

Stage 2

Discussion and negotiations

This stage entails discussions with all interested parties, such as administrators, teachers, researchers, workers, counselors etc. All possible ideas and solutions should be considered during this stage. It is best to get all these ideas across by means of a draft proposal.

Stage 3

Literature review

Studies which focus on comparable research should be reviewed at this stage. Emphasis should be placed upon objectives, processes and problems encountered. This will help the researcher to work more effectively during his own work.

Stage 4

Redefinition of problem

In this stage the problems and issues identified during the first stage are modified to utilize the material accumulated during the second and third stages. The assumptions underlying the project are made explicit during this stage. This stage has to answer the question: what do we really want to know?

Stage 5

Infrastructure

Issues such as sampling, administration, allocation of the deployment of personnel and so on are decided upon and finalized during this stage.

Stage 6

Choice of evaluation procedures

The continuous evaluation procedures and the ways in which they will be modified if they fail are decided upon. It is important to note that operational research questions such as 'who', 'what', 'why', etc., will be given quantitative or qualitative designs and that 'how' will be studied by means of qualitative research methodology.

Stage 7

Operational stage

The research is now implemented by means of the collection of data, monitoring of tasks and feedback to the researchers and the classification and analysis of data.

Stage 8

Conclusion

The data is interpreted, inferences are drawn and reports are drawn up. If at this stage the implementation of the intervention no longer appears worthwhile, a new series of studies focusing on qualitative research designs could be completed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The model of action research proposed above can be used in any programme designed upon by nature conservation agencies. The agencies' goals in terms of EE can easily be incorporated and then evaluated for effectiveness:

1. It is important to note that EE programmes should:
   a. Disseminate knowledge;
   b. Create appropriate awareness; and
   c. Create commitment in order to be successful.

2. In order for this to happen practically, the following topics should be covered by the programme:
   a. Ecology; evolution, entomology, natural resource conservation, protected areas and aesthetics.

3. The author agrees with Reilly (1965) that these topics should be taught with an emphasis on soil saving, waste management, pollution, population control and wild animal protection.

4. The basic issue then is that organizations working in the field of EE should on the one hand formulate their own goals for their programmes, but should on the other hand, see to it that their goals work towards the holistic approach described above. The acceptance of basic environmentally oriented principles on a general level, will only become a reality once all organizations working in the field of EE start working towards the same general goals. One can only hope that the workshops in EE organised by EAASA and the CSIR for 1986 will work towards these common goals.

Anyone familiar with the work and writing of Jean Piaget cannot help but be struck by his amazing productivity. A conservative estimate of his writing is over 40 books and more than 100 articles on child psychology alone. To these may be added numerous contributions to the fields of philosophy, education and methodology. In his autobiography, Piaget attributed his productivity to his help from his colleagues, but the following passage also provides us with an interesting insight into one of his sources of personal energy:

'To me, thus, I owe to a particular bent of my character. Fundamentally I am a seeker when only work can relieve. In earlier years I was able and like to talk or take part in meetings of all kinds. But I feel a compelling need for solitude more frequently with nature. After morning spent with others, I begin each afternoon with a walk during which I put my thoughts and coordinate them, after which I can work at my home in the country... This is dissipation between myself and the natural world and as a form of necessity... (in whom development stands on the intellectual activity which has enabled me to amount to a permanent field of anxiety and transform this into a need for work).'