

ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PRACTICES OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS WORKING WITH IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION/ UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS PROGRAM (II/USP) AND EVALUATION PRACTICES THAT ENHANCE UTILIZATION OF EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between the practices of external evaluators working with Immediate Intervention/ Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) and evaluation practices that enhance utilization of evaluation recommendations and organizational learning. Literature on the process of program evaluation was reviewed as well as literature surrounding utilization-focused processes and organizational learning.

This study used an online survey to assess the perceptions of principals working in II/USP schools. The survey assessed the practices of external evaluators and the effects of the evaluation process. A stratified random sample of 408 principals was selected from the 1,290 schools enrolled in the II/USP program. Following the removal of *Out of Scope* respondents, an effective response rate of 41.7% was achieved. Data collected from the 65 principals were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Chi-Square and *t*-tests were used to determine the significance of differences between the respondents and the population; the difference between the groups was not significant.

Frequency distributions and descriptive statistics were conducted to identify evaluator practices. The research questions were explored using *t*-tests to

determine the statistical significance of the observed differences between the means of perceived evaluator practices based on various demographics. Correlational studies and regression analyses were used to explore the relationships among the various utilization-focused variables and the influence of these variables on increasing utilization of evaluation findings and enhancing organizational learning.

Findings suggest that II/USP principals perceived that external evaluators consistently used utilization-enhancing strategies, with few exceptions. Results of the *t*-tests suggest that demographics, such as schools size and socioeconomics, can influence utilization-focused practices, but the results were sometimes mixed or the means were not significantly different. The study found that most of the utilization variables intercorrelated and that specific evaluator and evaluation practices contributed to increased use of findings and that these variables had a perceived influence on organizational learning.

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