



**WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE EVALUATORS TO IMPROVE SOCIETY  
(Donald Campbell's Experimenting Society)**

**TOPLUMU GELİŞTİRMEDE DEĞERLENDİRME ARAŞTIRMACILARININ ROLÜ NEDİR?  
(Donald Campbell'in Deneysel Toplumu)**

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**Abstract**

Evaluation research involves the use of social research methodologies to judge and improve the planning, monitoring, effectiveness, and efficiency of health, education, welfare, and other human service programs. Donald Campbell is an evaluator and known one of the most popular theorist of experimental society. The study discusses "What is the role of the evaluators to improve society?" as a theoretical issue based on Donald Campbell's experimenting society. Firstly, the study explains theory of Donald Campbell's experimenting society giving main points of his ideas. Later, the study discusses the roles of evaluators to improve society.

**Key Words:** Evaluation, Donald Campbell, Roles of the Evaluators, Improving Society

**Öz**

Sosyal araştırma metotlarını kullanarak, sağlık, eğitim, refah ve diğer toplumsal hizmet programları hakkında hüküm vermek, planlamayı geliştirmek, bu programları izlemek, etkililiklerini ve başarısını belirlemek üzere yapılan araştırmalara değerlendirme araştırmaları denir. Donald Campbell bir değerlendirme araştırmacıdır ve en popüler deneysel toplum teorisyenlerinden de biridir. Bu çalışma toplumu geliştirmede değerlendiricilerin rolünü, bir teorik sorun olarak, Donald Campbell'in deneysel toplumu temelinde tartışır. Öncelikle, çalışma Donald Campbell'in deneysel toplum teorisini, O'nun fikirlerinin ana kısımlarını vererek açıklar. Daha sonra ise toplumu geliştirmede değerlendiricilerin rollerini tartışır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Değerlendirme araştırmaları, Donald Campbell, Değerlendiricilerin rolleri, toplumu geliştirmek

**Introduction**

Evaluation refers to the process of determining the merit, worth, or value of something, or the product of that process (*Scriven, 1991*).

Evaluation research involves the use of social research methodologies to judge and improve the planning, monitoring, effectiveness, and efficiency of health, education, welfare, and other human service programs (*Rossi & Freeman, 1985, p.19*).

Although, there are some clear similarities between evaluation and research they differ significantly in some ways. The purpose of evaluation is to provide information for learning and decision making (intension is use) but the purpose of research is to develop new knowledge and seeks conclusions, new laws, new theories. In research, topic and questions are determined by the researcher. On the other



hand, evaluation seeks to particular phenomena. Evaluation is service oriented and undertaken at the orders of a client. Audiences in evaluation are clients but audiences in research are other researchers.

Focusing the study in research and evaluation is also shows differences. In evaluation study, evaluator identifies background of evaluand (object of the evaluation), purpose of evaluation, stakeholders and audiences. In research, researcher develops a problem statement, reviews the literature on the topic, and develops hypotheses or research questions. Evaluator develops key questions to guide the evaluation. Evaluator reports results to evaluation clients and makes recommendations relevant to evaluation questions and rarely publishes the results. Researcher reports results to other researchers and practitioners and makes suggestions for future research and often publishes study's findings.

Why evaluation? Evaluation can contribute organizations in some ways: ensures quality, increases organization members' knowledge, helps prioritize resources, helps plan and deliver organizational initiatives, helps organization members to be accountable, help convince others of the need or effectiveness of various organizational initiatives and helps fast becoming a marketable skill (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2001).

There are many evaluation models and theorists who are the most associated with these models. The main theorists and their models are Scriven–Goal-Free, Stake–Responsive, Patton–Utilization/Focused, and Campbell–Experimenting Society.

*Goal-Free Evaluation:* Evaluator stays away from learning the stated goals of the program before and during the evaluation. Evaluator observes and measures actual processes and outcomes rather than intended program outcomes. Evaluator has minimum contact with the program's manager and staff and does not know the program's stated goals and objectives. Merit is determined by relating program effects to the relevant needs of the impacted population (Scriven, 1991).

*Responsive Evaluation:* In responsive evaluation, evaluators are responsive to the information needs of various stakeholders who are intended users of the evaluation findings. Responsive evaluation assumes that stakeholders know what they need to know. This evaluation approach seeks to answer of the question "What does the program look like to different people?" and answer this question by using a case study methodology that employs both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. In responsive evaluation, the report is written for different audiences (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2001).

*Utilization/Focused Evaluation:* It is a user oriented evaluation model. Patton defines utilization-focuses evaluation as a process for making decisions about and focusing an evaluation on intended use by



intended users. In this approach, evaluator is a facilitator of evaluative decisionmaking by intended users. It is also assume that stakeholders will have a high degree of involvement in the evaluation's design, implementation, and use of the findings. The major question in this approach is "What are the information needs of stakeholders and how will they use the findings?" (1994, pp. 317-318).

Evaluators should have responsibilities to contribute the society which they have been living in. There are many scientific researches and they have been waiting among dusts on the bookshelves. A lot of money, labor and time spent for them but nobody has used these researches for any useful purposes. In this point, Donald Campbell strongly advocates that research should be useful to improve society and evaluators should have responsibility about it (Campbell, 1984).

The study discusses "What is the role of the evaluators to improve society?" as a theoretical issue based on Donald Campbell's experimenting society. Firstly, the study explains theory of Donald Campbell's experimenting society giving main points of his ideas. Later, the study discusses the roles of evaluators to improve society.

### **The Theory of Donald Campbell**

Donald Campbell is an evaluator, a general psychologist, a social psychologist, a methodologist for social sciences and a philosopher of science. Moreover, he is known one of the most popular theorists of experimental society. According to Campbell, society should be "experimenting society" which is non-dogmatic, honest, accountable and open minded society. These have been created from our present democratic ideals. The experimenting society is like an alternative future society. Society is changing rapidly and we should adapt to rapid social changes to survive in society (Campbell, 1981). It is a unique characteristic of contemporary societies that we identify, plan and carry out programs intended to develop our social systems. It is also known that the programs do not always make their planned improvements (Airasian, 1983).

Campbell believes that the purpose of the evaluation should be improvement of society through generating true knowledge about program outcomes. There are many programs in society to serve for different aims. Evaluator should evaluate these social programs and submit his/her recommendations to improve them. Audiences are person who would be affected from evaluation results such as students, teachers, supervisors, stakeholders, parents and so on. Audiences and purposes clearly linked because evaluators can serve the society improving social programs.



Donald Campbell gave importance to “Program Evaluation Research”. Program evaluation plays a vital role to prepare for future of society. Evaluators work with government to assess the impact of the governmental programs to cure social ills such as Head Start, Job Corps, Welfare Reform and the like. Program evaluation has relationship with experimenting society in two ways. Firstly, evaluators try to implement high quality program evaluations. This causes to think about alternative political systems. Secondly, evaluators just propose new policies to decision-makers. In this case, evaluators should submit more and different recommendations (Campbell, 1981). These are persuasive activities because investigator has a permission to establish cause and affect chains of logic among program and their outcomes (Airasian, 1983).

Campbell’s substantive interest in bias and its control are less known his methodological interest in factors that collection, analysis and interpretation of social data (Reichardt, 1998). Campbell’s had interest to control and reduce of bias during data collection, analysis and interpretation. Campbell invented the quasi-experimental design to reduce the plausibility of rival hypotheses. Moreover, he used cost-benefit analysis and objective-based research methods. These methods are judgmental, flexible, criticizable and revisable. From the methodological view, best results can be gained if participants do not know experiment. On the other hand, there is a political situation in social programs and people should know what is voting or what are they voting. As a result of this, evaluators in social area should work with volunteers.

Social indicators such as opinion surveys, records of death, diseases, crimes, accidents, incomes, school achievements etc. would be thought less bias. In the experimenting society, decision-makers maybe use many of them to reach a better decision. Opinion surveys are very important as social indicators so decision-makers can use these results for their decision about program and their campaign. Participants would know where their opinions are used and who had paid for these questions. Also, they would be given the results of the survey (Airasian, 1983).

My ideas have some differences and similarities with Donald Campbell. I agree with Donald Campbell about evaluation purpose to improve society. This is related also accountability and decision support of Chelimsky because evaluators should have responsibilities to improve society. Donald uses generally quantitative methods in his researches like social indicators, pre-test and post-test. I think using different methods is useful for validity of the evaluation. We can eliminate biases by using multiple indicators for same problem. In this way, we can determine program effectiveness, benefits and harms.



According to evaluation type, evaluators should use as much as possible methods for data collection. Moreover, scientist can arrange many conditions in the laboratory but in social sciences they cannot. For example, they cannot control every social affect in the schools. Problems with scientific/experimental evaluation is that this approach focuses on defining the appropriate measures of input and output, but most cognitive and behavioral processes in human beings are not certain, and intervening variables may be more important than the supposed “treatment”.

In my opinion, the purpose of evaluation should be correction and improvement of social programs, policies, products and institutions. Every social program, policy, product and institution serves for different aims in society. The first job of evaluators is to know that what the purpose or purposes of social program, policy, product or institution. After that, evaluators collect data to learn that what is going on. Evaluators can use different methods for data collection. For example; interview, survey, observation, looking records and social indicators etc. The next step should be diagnosis of the existing situation which explains the good and bad points; necessary and unnecessary; or wrong and correct points. The last step is to improvement of the program by comparing purposes and existing situation.

### **The Role of the Evaluator**

Evaluation is the organized data collection and analysis of data to make decisions. It is a process in which most well run programs are engaged by evaluators. Experimenting evaluation model has some its own features in practice. Firstly, evaluator determines a population and sample to match the target audience for the program that he/she wishes to evaluate. Sample is selected from population by using randomly assign method. After that, tests and other measurement instruments are given to participants before the programs are implemented. Moreover, new program is used for half of the participants who are called as experimental group. Current program is implemented for other half of the participants who are called as control group. After the program, re-administer tests and other instruments are implemented, and compare the results which are measured for the two groups to find differences between experimental and control groups. In this process, the role of evaluators is defined to determine evaluand’s merit or worth. The role of evaluator is portrayed as a judge with this definition.

In evaluation, the evaluator has been given the responsibility of making judgment that determines worthy or worthless of the evaluand. The evaluator has marvelous power. Due to this power and responsibility, it is important to look carefully at the role of evaluator.



In Donald Campell's experimenting society, the role of evaluator can be described with some topics such as; describer, measurer, judge. He/she should describe program including its purposes, its success, its feasibility, and so on. Evaluators also should determine that "what is going on there?" to describe the program exactly.

Evaluator performs this role by using scientific methods. In this point, Campbell supports to use quantitative methods to reduce bias such as: survey, quasi-experimental design, using questionnaire and so on. According to Campbell, evaluator should not be advocator of any side of audiences or stakeholders. They just should think to improve society. In the same time, these quantitative results are judgmental, criticizable, and revisable. Quantitative data also can be used to convince audiences about results.

Another important role of the evaluators is to making judgment to improve social program or reduce of poverty. Evaluator has both big authorization and accountability. They are located at the center of evaluation affairs. Evaluators need to convince decision makers with the result of evaluation so they should provide enough evidence or identifying relevant documentation is support of suggestions and recommendations in their evaluation report. This approach helps decision makers.

Decision makers maybe use these recommendations of evaluators especially if the results are already approved by decision makers. They can try to convince audiences by using the results of evaluation as evidences. They can support their decisions and campaigns to implement new program or policy using these results. Ethically, participants should have rights to know where their opinions are used and who had paid for these questions because of all these reasons mentioned above. Also, they would be given the results of the evaluation (Airasian, 1983).

In order to be effective, an evaluator must develop and encourage a positive relationship with stakeholders and audiences because the main purpose is to help decision makers. If evaluators can develop good relationship they would have more chance to convince the decision makers. Otherwise all labor, time and money would be wasted.

All roles of evaluator mentioned above are important but in my opinion, the most important of them is to improve society. The evaluator should focus on improvement of the quality in society in every steps of evaluation. Every institution and job was created to meet the needs of society and their worth is related with their quality of services.



Evaluation also services the society through evaluating programs to determine their worth and merit. Administrators of society implement many programs to increase the quality of society. Unfortunately, these programs do not always produce intended improvements. Society has some its own dynamics and change continuously. Generally, the program is useful when it is implemented. After a while it can be lost its effectiveness because of the dynamics of society. In this point evaluators play a crucial role. They determine the effectiveness of the program and submit their recommendations to decision makers. It is like an endless circle because after a while renovated program would reduce its effectiveness because of the dynamics of society.

### **Conclusion**

Evaluation refers to the process of determining the merit, worth, or value of evaluand; it is the object of the evaluation. Donald Campbell is one the most popular theorist of evaluation and his model—experimenting society—focused on improving society. Evaluators should have responsibilities to contribute the society otherwise all labor, money and time would be wasted.

Campbell's experimenting society is criticized in some ways. Recently, some evaluators reject the using formal experimental methods by asking casual questions. They claim that evaluators should use non-casual questions and also qualitative methods. There is a tendency using qualitative research methods in social sciences. Advocators of qualitative methods accept that some precious measurements are ignored but they increase the usefulness of the findings for people in and around the program.

Evaluators need correct and feasible information about program to do best recommendations to decision makers. There is a conflict here between having precious and generalizable data and having more useful findings. It looks like both of them are inevitable. Evaluator can minimize the negative points of both methods by using both of them together.



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