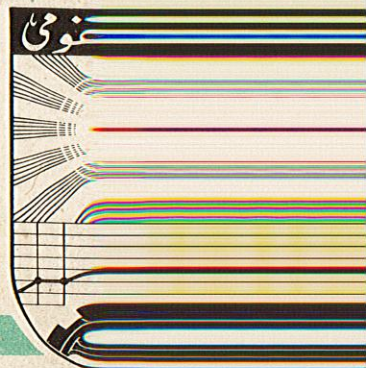


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EVALUATION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

by

Nadia Naguib

Under the Direction of

W.A. Hassouna, M.D., Ph.D.

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Nadia Naguib*

" Opinions Expressed and Positions Taken by
Authors are Entirely their Own and do not Necessarily
Reflect the Views of the Institute of National Planning ".

* B.A. Institute of Social Work and Graduate of I.N.P. 1963 at the
Present Time in Ministry of National Planning Department of
Evaluation.

This brief paper contains a review of some literature on the subject of evaluation of social services.

The evaluation of social services presents some difficulties that evaluation of other types of programs does not. Therefore this paper will look at some of the difficulties involved and also will look at the two main tools for evaluation currently used in many countries to see their role in overcoming some of the basic shortcomings. The two main tools for evaluation reviewed in this paper are:

- (1) PPBS - Planning, Programming and Budgeting System (See Appendix A for explanation of PPBS);
- (2) Benefit-Cost Analysis (See Appendix B for explanation of Benefit-Cost Analysis).

For a thorough treatment of the question of evaluation of social services the reader should refer to the works of Dr. W.A. Hassouna, who served as the supervisor of this paper, especially to his article entitled "Basic Concepts for Evaluation of Social Action Programs".

The single biggest and therefore most significant problem with the evaluation of social services is that social services deal with people. All kinds of people, who, from program to program are categorized according to many different needs. So in order to evaluate any social service program one has to know what its purpose was and how it was supposed to serve the people for whom it was intended.¹ These sound simple enough when written down but these very simple questions are often overlooked by evaluators and if they are not attended to the evaluation will fall short.

¹ Hassouna, W.A. Case Studies in Evaluation of Social Action Programs: Speech and Hearing Mobile Units Program and Safety Education Programs. Cairo: INP. March, 1970. p.iii.

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The PPB system - an abbreviation for The Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System - was developed for the department of Defense in the USA. It is a system which theoretically would make evaluation a fairly simple task but since, even in the USA they have not been able to implement it completely, evaluation of a program using it would still present some difficulties.

The PPBS seems to have made the decision making and evaluation harder in the USA because it required more questions to be asked which were never bothered about before. Another point about its use in the USA is discussed in the opinion stated by Dr. Rivlin when she wrote:

"Anyone who thought that PPBS was a magic formula to make the allocation of Federal resources easy had better think again. There is no magic formula because there decisions are inherently difficult. They are difficult, first, because they are made in the face of great uncertainty and second, because the outcomes affect different groups of people importantly and differently. Far from making the decisions easier, the PPB system has undoubtedly made decision makers more aware than ever before of how hard the decisions they have to make really are.

In the defense area, uncertainty is the dominant difficulty. Good analysis of the costs and effectiveness of alternative actions is highly useful, but it can only reduce the uncertainties by as small percentage. In the domestic area, the uncertainty surrounding decisions need not be so great although at present it probably is.

It seems that the consultant-evaluator would be a much more suitable type for evaluation of social services than the control type of evaluator. This is especially true when one considers that social service programs deal with people and because of this need a more personal approach to evaluation even though the evaluator is coming from outside the service being evaluated.³

In addition to the question of the role of the evaluator in evaluation there is the question of a method of evaluation. Different methods of planning call for different methods of evaluation. On this point Dr. Hassouna illustrates in his Basic Concepts⁴ the method of evaluation suitable if the planning objective was to have the outcome of social service programs affect productivity. So the planning goals are the most important thing to identify before one can decide on the method of evaluation. This was also brought out clearly in Dr. Rivlin's article on the PPB system in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare of the USA.

³Ibid., refer especially to the role of the consultant-evaluator in the first case study presented: The Evaluation of the Speech and Hearing Mobile Unit Program.

⁴Hassouna, W.A. Basic Concepts for Evaluation of Social Action Programs. (Draft of an article to be published in April, 1970).

It would be possible to run domestic programs as a continuous series of experiments - to try different things, to evaluate the results, to expand those that work well, and cut back on those that do not. Good evaluation systems will certainly not be quick or easy, but they can be used to make programs far more effective than they are now. The potentiality of PPBS for reducing the uncertainty surrounding decisions seems to me far greater in the domestic than in the defense area. The other difficulty - the differential impact of decisions on people - is, however, far more obvious and troublesome in the domestic than in the foreign area. Defense decisions result in some people being better protected or bearing a heavier burden than others, but these differential effects are not nearly so obvious as in domestic programs. In domestic programs of direct service to particular types of people, everyone knows who the immediate beneficiaries are. A good PPB system can illuminate these distributional decisions, but can not make them any easier. Indeed, assembling and publicizing information on who is helped by particular government programs may intensify political conflict." 5.

In her article Dr. Rivlin discusses the problem of PPBS evaluation in greater detail. She wrote that the introduction of PPBS in the Department of HEW caused a greater emphasis to be put on evaluation of what the programs of HEW actually do. This was true because in PPBS it is necessary to get routine information about the "outputs" of the programs.

⁵Rivlin, Alice M. The Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare: Some Lessons from Experience. Washington, D.C. : The Brookings Institute 1969. p. 921-922.

Dr. Rivlin states that evaluation of the effectiveness of HEW programs is difficult for three main reasons:

- (1) First, it is usually far from obvious what one would like to have happen... what the measure of success of the program should be;
- (2) Second, most HEW programs are designed to help individuals function better. Their success can only be gauged by following the individuals over some considerable period of time to find out what actually happened to them and follow-up is very expensive even if done on a sample basis;
- (3) Third, it is difficult to disentangle the effects of HEW programs from all the other things which affect the health, education, and welfare of individuals. 6.

Dr. Rivlin thinks that evaluation which results in giving a grade to a total array of programs is not nearly as useful as the type of evaluation that is designed to identify successful ways of spending money for a particular goal and to improve the average "effectiveness of a program", such as family planning, is much more important. She and Dr. Hassouna both stress the evaluation of specific objectives to their relation to project or program outcomes. She tends to view identification of success in monetary terms where Dr. Hassouna looks into the problem of evaluation of outcomes in terms of stated goals and deviations from set standards of performance or service and hence gets at the root of the problem of system evaluation.

⁶Ibid., p. 915

Many of the problems of HEW's evaluation using PPBS are the same as those which would be encountered by a Ministry of Social Affairs or a Ministry of Health since their programs have the same characteristics in terms of helping people.

It seems that one of the essential requirements of the PPBS is a great amount of statistical information on the whole population. The lack of this information creates difficulties for the implementation of the system since implementation depends on the active participation of all program and project directors and also depends on their having precise statistical information on their programs and also that they have clearly defined the objectives for whatever time period they are planning.

PPBS, in spite of the fact that it calls for information perhaps not immediately available, does provide a systematic and orderly process which would make it necessary to have an evaluation technique that would also be clear and precise.

Benefit-cost analysis is a form of analysis also very useful as an evaluation tool. According to the sources used in this paper it seems that there is very little actual determination of benefit-cost analysis in the area of social service evaluation. There have been several studies in the health field but mostly they look at the benefit side only and the reason is that often the costs just cannot be precisely identified. Cost-Benefit Analysis also calls for a high level of knowledge of economics in applying it to any program and of course it is harder to apply it in social service programs because it is not possible to identify all of the social costs or benefits in such programs.

A very interesting study which did use the Benefit-Cost Analysis approach in the social service field was that by Neenan when he used it in the evaluation of a T.B. screening program. He points out the usefulness and also the limitations of the Benefit-Cost technique which would be good to consider. He wrote:

"The Benefit-Cost Analysis used in this study is not proposed as a technique to encompass completely all the pertinent values involved in public health practice. Within the quantitative analysis itself numerous assumptions were required before the program benefits could be evaluated. Furthermore, many facets of public policy are insensitive to the probings of economists. Public health efforts, for example, often in effect transfer wealth from the relatively affluent to those presently disadvantaged by illness. And in the genesis of such public policy the counsel of economics is irrelevant. But though the decisions to make such transfers may come prior to any economic considerations, once they are made, economic factors become extremely relevant. For example, the decision to "do something for tuberculosis patients-both actual and potential" precedes the economic calculus. But given several alternative tuberculosis programs (i.e., "ways of "doing something") and given limited manpower and resources, the fact of opportunity costs must be weighed by the public health policy-maker. The decision to aid one group with program A is an implicit refusal to aid another group with program B. And if it happens that a dollar spent on program B gives greater relief to the beneficiaries than is the case with program A, the altruistic desire to "do something" for T.B. patients may be blunted by a failure to evaluate accurately the relevant economic considerations." 7.

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Neenan, William B. Normative Evaluation of a Public Health Program. Michigan: Institute of Public Administration, the University of Michigan, Michigan Governmental Studies No. 48, 1967. p. 65

Neenan, in his article, seems to think that the Benefit-Cost Analysis serves a most useful purpose in the case of programs which have been in operation for a while and may be taken for granted. Benefit-Cost Analysis forces the evaluator to set up exact normative criteria for deciding what to do about the program. He wrote:

"As a program in time recedes from the margin of decision into the ranks of the well-established, core programs of the agency, its political relevance diminishes and it can too easily become frozen in a form which is not responsive to the environment it is intended to serve. In such cases there is danger that the criterion determining the actual pattern of distribution and scale of operation becomes by default "what we did before". 8.

This statement points out the usefulness for such a form of evaluation for social service programs since many of these programs need to be reevaluated in light of changing priorities and changing technology (such as newer methods and better ones for doing the job the old program was supposed to do) and for changing populations since the rapid rate of urbanization often affects the need for a revision in social service programs, whether the programs are in the area of health, education, welfare, recreation, culture, youth organization, community development etc.

⁸ Neenan, op. cit., p. 3.

To summarize what has been said in this paper the following points are helpful:

- (1) Forms of evaluation can be either a control type or evaluation for change type. Each requires different approaches.
- (2) One technique of evaluation of programs is called PPBS. It is very useful as a planning tool and as a tool to set the evaluation requirements but in order to be of real use it requires a lot of precise statistical information. It is not a substitute for appropriations budgeting, it is only another tool for program administrators to use.
- (3) Benefit-Cost Analysis is another useful tool or technique of evaluation. The difficulty with it is that it is very often difficult to define costs in social services. It is particularly helpful in evaluation of programs which have been in existence and hence are not decided on the margin.

The attached bibliography provides the sources used for this paper which proved to be the most helpful.

APPENDIX A: THE PLANNING, PROGRAMMING, and BUDGETING SYSTEM

"Systematic analysis of alternative ways of reaching objectives is the heart and soul of PPBS. A good analysis specifies an agreed-on objective or set of objectives, and brings together as much information as possible about the costs, benefits, advantages and disadvantages of each. The analyst uses the results of program evaluation and goes beyond them to try to estimate the effectiveness of new programs. In a sense he is an evaluator of programs which do not yet exist." ⁹

The basic steps in PPBS can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Choice of problem program to be studied
As for example, a study of higher education, of the welfare system, etc.
- (2) Specification of the objectives which the government (or Ministry) has in supporting the program.
- (3) Examination of the available information with respect to each of the objectives identified.
- (4) Delineation of the major options open to the government (or Ministry) in the achievement of the desired objectives.
- (5) Evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives as ways of furthering the objectives.
- (6) Development of the program budget on the basis of the analysis in steps 1-5.

The program budget is then a way of organizing information. It is primarily a planning tool, but final decisions on the budget must be made in terms of the actual appropriations approved by the governmental body responsible for allocation of funds to the various sectors.¹⁰

⁹Rivlin, op. cit., p. 915

¹⁰Ibid., p. 912

APPENDIX B: BENEFIT-COST ANALYSIS

The term Benefit in Benefit-Cost Analysis is Synonymous with costs averted. Benefit-Cost Analysis is an economic concept primarily concerned with the notion of opportunity cost. Benefit-Cost Analysis has two areas of focus:

- (1) Estimation of costs averted (benefits) as a result of a proposed course of action with respect to the problem under study;
- (2) Definition of the program and its costs which would have to be incurred if the proposed course of action to achieve the benefits (costs averted) were undertaken.

The most important step in Benefit-Cost Analysis is that of establishing the set of decision rules according to which the Benefits and costs of the program are to be analyzed.

In his work Normative Criteria for Government Services Neenan explained the problem of Benefit-Cost Analysis when he wrote:

"For the situation with no budgetary constraint operative, program benefits and costs must be estimated for feasible levels of operation to determine at which point net benefits (benefits less costs) are maximized. For many types of government services the revealed preference conundrum and the problem of moving from individual preference to social choice seem to preclude the possibility of benefit measurement with its normative implications. But for that subset of government services whose consumer benefit is negligible or measurable by user charges and whose investment return is calculable, not only can an optimum allocation of a fixed expenditure among areas be determined, but also the benefits resulting from various levels of the program can be measured." 11.

¹¹ Neenan, op. cit., p. 6.

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