



HOW TO GUIDE: Paradigms exposed

OVERVIEW: Activity to engage in, reflect on discuss your world views as they pertain to inquiry.

OBJECTIVES:

- Complete a questionnaire to identify extent to which you have more positivist or naturalistic orientation to inquiry.
- Discuss how one's worldview may influence an evaluation's questions, design and data collection methods
- Consider how your worldview may have affected previous evaluations in which you were involved.

ACTIVITY:

- 1) Complete the evaluation questionnaire below.
- 2) Score the instrument by adding 1 point for each checkmark you have beside the responses below. These points do no indicate good or bad or right or wrong answers.
 - 1 a)
 - 2 a)
 - 3 b)
 - 4 b)
 - 5 a)
 - 6 a)
 - 7 a)
 - 8 b)
 - 9 a)
 - 10 a)
 - 11 b)
 - 12 b)
 - 13 a)
 - 14 b)
 - 15 a)
- 3) Add up your points. A higher number of points means that you lean towards a more positivist worldview, and a lower number of points means you lean towards a more naturalistic or qualitative worldview.



- 4) Debrief the activity. Either discuss as a group, or reflect as an individual by answering the following questions:
- What was your experience in completing the questionnaire? Was it difficult? If yes, why?
 - Did your score surprise you? If yes, why? Why not?
 - How might one's worldview affect his or her involvement in evaluation? How might it have affected your involvement in previous evaluations?
 - How would you deal with working with a colleague with a different worldview from yours?



Evaluation questionnaire

For each of the following 15 paired statements, put a check by the one that comes closest to what you believe. There are no right or wrong answers.

- 1) a) There exists a single reality independent of any person.
 b) There exists multiple realities that are constructed by people.
- 2) a) Reality(ies) is governed by immutable natural laws.
 b) Reality(ies) is *not* governed by immutable natural laws.
- 3) a) An observer in an organization becomes part of that which is being observed.
 b) An observer in an organization can remain detached from what she or he is observing.
- 4) a) The context of a program is needed to understand what is occurring in it.
 b) A process can be investigated effectively without concern for the specific context.
- 5) a) Evaluation should be able to determine the true relationship between two variables or factors.
 b) Evaluation provides tentative conclusions that are always open to interpretation and modification.
- 6) a) The truth about any relationship between two variables can be determined by testing it empirically.
 b) The truth about any relationship between two variables can be determined by judgements of knowledgeable experts without further tests.
- 7) a) Facts and values are independent.
 b) Facts have no meaning except in some value context.
- 8) a) Every action is “caused” by an infinite array of considerations that may never be known.
 b) Every action or outcome has a primary cause that will be identified at some future time.
- 9) a) The value of evaluation is to predict and control behaviour.
 b) The value of evaluation is to increase understanding.



- 10) a) Solutions to organizational problems in one organization should be applicable to other organizations.
- b) Solutions to organization problems are unique unto themselves.
- 11) a) Meaningful organizational change is nonlinear and dependent on the active involvement of those affected by the change
- b) Change is a rational linear process that will occur naturally regardless of the specific people involved.
- 12) a) Change is the normal condition of life.
- b) Change occurs only when something unusual causes it. Nonchange, or status quo, is the normal state of organizations.
- 13) a) Systematic collection of objective data about knowledge, behaviours, and physical conditions provides the most meaningful knowledge about learning.
- b) Obtaining feelings, thoughts and meanings of actions through interviews provides the most meaningful knowledge about learning.
- 14) a) The more nearly a study reflects the complexity of learning using “thick description,” (explaining the context of a behaviour) the more valuable it is.
- b) Quantitative data analysed with tests of significance are a necessary part of a valuable evaluation study.
- 15) a) If a study cannot be replicated, and the results verified, I would not have confidence in the study.
- b) A 6-month case study of an organization carried out by a team of evaluators would provide valuable information even if it could not be replicated and results could not be verified.

Adapted from: Building Evaluation Capacity: 72 activities for teaching and training by Hailie Preskill and Darlene Russ-Eft.