

THE EVALUATION CORNER

By Mary Church, PhD

Introduction to Cross-Cultural Educational Program Planning and Evaluation

A story described by Benjamin Franklin (as cited in Brislin, & Segall, *Cross-Cultural Research: The Role of Culture in Understanding Human Behavior*, 1975, Learning Resources) sets the stage for a discussion of cross-cultural educational programming and evaluation:

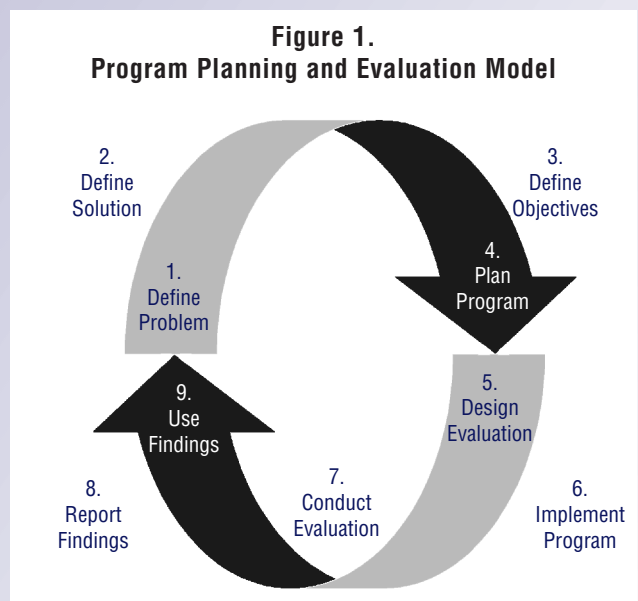
At the treaty of Lancaster, in Pennsylvania, anno 1744, between the government of Virginia and the Six Nations, the commissioners from Virginia acquainted the Indians, by a speech, that there was at Williamsburg a college with a fund for educating Indian youth and that, if the chiefs of the Six Nations would send down half a dozen of their sons to that college, the government would take care that they be well provided for and instructed in all the learning of the white people. The Indian's spokesperson replied: "We are convinced that you mean to do us good by your proposal, and we thank you heartily. But, you, who are wise, must know that different nations have different conceptions of things, and you will not therefore take it amiss if our ideas of this kind of education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some experiences of it. Several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of Northern provinces. They were instructed in all your sciences. But, when they came back to us, they were bad runners; ignorant of every means of living in the woods; unable to bear either cold or hunger; knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, nor kill an enemy; spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor counsellors; they were totally good for nothing. We are, however, not the less obligated by your kind offer, though we decline accepting it, and, to show our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take care of their education, instruct them in all we know, and make men of them."

As a protectorate of the U.S., the system of education in Micronesia has been largely influenced by the federal government. Soon after WWII, the U.S. provided assistance to encourage Micronesian communities to develop primary schools in major settlement areas, which were to be supported by and responsible to the local culture. In the 1960's, the federal investment in the region increased enormously, and the previously autonomous educational system was transformed to resemble a U.S. curriculum, with universal education, academic orientation, and the use of English as a language of instruction—all provided largely by American teachers. This "Americanization" of the educational system removed control from local authority and disengaged schools from the community.

With the dissolution of the Trust Territory agreements in the last few decades and the corresponding political independence of the Micronesian nations, control of the educational system has now reverted back to local rule. The vast majority of teachers and administrators are now Micronesians. While this autonomy has moderated the Americanization of the schools, the current public school curriculum is still largely based on that of California school systems, with little adaptation to the regional context.

In a recent paper published in the *Micronesian Educator* (2005), I describe cultural issues involved in the planning and evaluation of educational programs within the context of a model of the major factors of program development and evaluation. As shown in

Figure 1, this model is composed of nine stages. In this model, evaluation is inextricably connected to program planning. Each stage in the process of program planning and evaluation is viewed as a link in the chain of effective program planning, evaluation, and improvement. When stages in the cycle are insufficiently concluded, and culture and context are not considered, the potential of each subsequent stage in the process is weakened.



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