

NEGOTIATION AND EVALUATION: ABSTRACT

Negotiation is an essential aspect to evaluation, to ensure that evaluations conducted are both utilisation-focused and participatory in approach. Evaluations inevitably involve a range of stakeholder interests and positions, which present the evaluator with significant challenges. One of these challenges is the management of the conflict and dissent that potentially arises between the stakeholders and the evaluator, and among stakeholders themselves, in relation to the focus of the evaluation. To work effectively with multiple stakeholders, the evaluator requires negotiation skills to manage conflict that may emerge. Typically negotiation is an essential component to the planning stage of an evaluation.

This paper summarises recent findings that suggests a new approach to negotiation, independent of stage, with a focus on sharing perspectives and creating a climate conducive to concessions and compromises. A set of negotiation principles for evaluation practice will be outlined. Both contemporary stakeholder and negotiation theories do not see the evaluator as the external expert with the role of standing outside the process. Rather, they view the evaluator as a catalyst and facilitator of a processes that will lead to stakeholders appreciating each others' positions with solutions emerging from increased understanding and enlightenment. An evaluator undertaking negotiation work needs to be aware of the processes and skills required of them.

Six principles are developed which encapsulate the proposed approach to evaluation. The first principle involves recognition of the political complexion to evaluation, which distinguishes it from research. The second principle highlights the contribution that multiple stakeholders can make to an evaluation. The third principle stresses the need for early assessment of stakeholder positions and planning the evaluation with stakeholders in mind. The fourth principle suggests the evaluator position him/herself as an active player among stakeholders. The fifth principle suggests that the evaluator develop specific skills in negotiation in order to respond to conflict. The final principle highlights the need for the evaluator to receive support

and skill development in managing conflict with multiple stakeholders. Cumulatively these principles represent a framework for evaluators to consider and potentially adopt when anticipating their involvement in an evaluation with multiple stakeholders.