

Abstract

This study focused on a developing volunteer training program provided by the Royal Thai Police, using a responsive evaluation to improve its effectiveness. The research was set in the context of significant changes being made in the training of tourist police volunteers in Phuket, one of the main tourist locations in Thailand.

The study was based on considering phases of the training program's development, using the Responsive Evaluation approach of Stake (1967, 2004) within an Interactive Form of Evaluation as categorized by Owen with Rogers (1999) and Owen (2006). The research considered Stake's three phases or 'countenances of evaluation': antecedents, transactions and outcomes. Antecedents were concerned with the preparation step before the training programs were launched. Transactions were concerned with the program delivery which involved the processes and problems identified when the programs were in operation. Outcomes involved the results of the training programs which provided a measure of how effective the training programs had been.

The three phases of the evaluation, in which standards were established and judgements made in order to identify the effectiveness of three specific programs, involved both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The antecedents included questionnaires, a focus group interview and a document analysis. The transactions included various types of data provided by the stakeholders – namely, the program staff, volunteers, trainers and tourists – and the inquiry involved document analysis, a focus group interview, semi-structured interviews, a course feedback survey (volunteers), a simple street survey (tourists), logs and journals (trainers), personal reflections (program staff) and three case studies. The outcomes included a

course feedback survey of the volunteers, a simple street survey of tourists in Phuket, and observations made by the program staff. The findings of the study were validated by means of triangulation of the outcomes in each phase.

The research had small but significant outcomes. These included the development of a policy for creating more effective volunteer training programs provided by the Thai Tourist Police, demonstrating the effectiveness of Responsive Evaluation in assisting in the development of a training program policy, and highlighting key elements that are required to improve the organisation of volunteer training in Thailand. Overall, the outcomes drawn from the volunteers, trainers and tourists suggest that the volunteer training programs had, indeed, proved to be effective.