



Needs Assessment

* Purpose: Needs assessments should only be administered to provide data for making informed and responsive programming decisions.

* Definition of “needs”: “Gaps between what is and what should be and the placing of those gaps in priority order. Needs can deal with desires, interests, or deficiencies. They can be specified for an individual or can be aggregated for groups, organizations, or the society.”

(adapted from Kaufman/Pennington)

* Operating assumptions:

1) Felt need or wants alone are inadequate for defining educational objectives.

2) Needs prescribed from leadership alone are also inadequate.

3) The term *need* always implies, more or less directly, some standard or valued state of affairs or certain social norms against which need is measured.

4) Need might best be defined from the educator’s perspective, that is to say, as prescription. The term *want* might best replace *need* as motive. Particularly in adult education, the educator must take full account of the motivational force that the wants of the learners have on whether they choose to participate.

5) As individual and organizational needs are defined, leaders must continually review operational paradigms and philosophical “lenses” in order to assess if the needs are consistent with the mission of the church. Appealing to the wants of the learners without consideration of the mission will lead a church to expend resources that don’t advance the mission – even if the learning experiences are appreciated by the learner.

(adapted from Monette)

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