

Chapter 1

Introduction. Aligning Evaluation Research and Health Promotion Values: Practices from the Americas

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A little more than 20 years after its birth, marked by the launching of its foundational document at an international WHO conference in Ottawa (World Health Organization, 1986), health promotion appears to be well and alive. Many western countries have now incorporated health promotion into mainstream public health practice. In Australia, for example, health promotion is defined as one of the core public health functions (National Public Health Partnership, 2000). The “Health on equal terms”, Swedish national public health program (Swedish National Committee for Public Health, 2000), is clearly a deliberate attempt to operationalize and implement values such as equity and action principles such as intersectoral action, spelled out in the Ottawa Charter (World Health Organization, 1986). In addition to this institutionalization in western states where it was an essential element of the strategy to meet the Alma Ata declaration goal of “Health for All in the year 2000” (Kickbusch, 2003), health promotion is now spreading in developing countries where it is increasingly conceived as an appropriate response to the enormous task of addressing the challenges associated with the epidemiological transition from infectious to chronic disease (Reddy, 2002) and from rural to urban life (Neiman & Hall, 2007). A decade ago, a leading scholar from the field of epidemiology characterized health promotion as the third revolution of public health (Breslow, 1999). Recently, the Bangkok Charter (World Health Organization, 2005) reiterated the relevance and appropriateness of health promotion to face the challenges of a globalized world. Clearly, what started in 1986 as a regional reform for public health has become a strong global current that shapes and orients public health practice (Kickbusch, 2007).

In the Continuity of the Work by WHO-EURO Working Group on Health Promotion Evaluation

Associated with this mainstreaming and expansion of health promotion is an increasing demand for it to prove its worth. During the past 10 years various initiatives

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