CHAPTER 18

Research Methodology and Practice Evaluation

In this chapter you will learn about:

- What evaluation is and why it is done
- The process for using evaluation to develop an intervention
- The two different perspectives in the classification of evaluation studies
- Types of evaluation from a *focus* perspective
- Types of evaluation from a *philosophical* perspective
- The process of undertaking an evaluation
- The importance of involving stakeholders in evaluation
- Ethics in evaluation

Keywords: *client-centred evaluation, cost–benefit evaluation, cost-effectiveness evaluation, ethics, evaluation, evaluation process, goal-centred, holistic evaluation, illuminative evaluation, impact evaluation, improvement-oriented evaluation, indicators, intervention, monitoring, objective-oriented evaluation, outcome evaluation, perspectives, process evaluation, stakeholders*.

Research methodology and practice evaluation are integrally related. Practice evaluation relies very heavily on the techniques, methods and skills of research methodology. For an evaluator it is imperative to be a good researcher. As this book is primarily written for newcomers to research and for practitioners in human services who are increasingly being asked to provide evidence of the effectiveness of their practice, it is only appropriate that this book includes a chapter that briefly outlines evaluation research and its relationship with research methodology.

Over the past few decades evaluation research has gained greater prominence and has developed rapidly, in both its applications and methodology. Scarcity of resources, emergence of a need to be accountable for effective and efficient delivery of services, realisation that consumers have the right to know about the quality of the service they are receiving, and the onset of an era of economic rationalism have all contributed to this rapid development. Though it relies very heavily on the contents of research methodology per se, evaluation research is now considered to be a self-defined discipline in its own right, with its own literature, techniques and skills. Methods and models of evaluation have now been applied to almost every field of knowledge in our society. Evaluators are being engaged to evaluate many social, economic, health, education and political programmes.

The very first question that may come to your mind, as a beginner, is: what is evaluation research? **Evaluation** may have a different meaning in different situations and, also, it may be understood differently by different people. It is, therefore, important for you to understand the various perspectives on and aspects of evaluation, so that when you come upon it you can define its meaning for your situation.

What is evaluation?

If you go through the literature on evaluation research, you will come across many different definitions. Below are some definitions that have been selected to highlight the various dimensions of evaluation. According to Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey (1999: 4): ‘Program evaluation is the use of social research procedures to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social interventions programs.’

As quoted by Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (1985: 3), the definition of the Joint Committee on Standards for Education Evaluation is: ‘Evaluation is the systematic assessment of the worth and merit of some objects.’

According to Alkin and Solomon (1983: 14):

> Evaluation is a process of ascertaining the decision areas of concern, selecting appropriate information, and collecting and analysing information in order to report summary data useful to decision makers in selecting among alternatives.

According to Rutman (1980: 17), ‘Program evaluation refers to the use of research methods to measure the effectiveness of operative programs.’ In another book, edited by Rutman (1977: 16), he also uses the following definition:

> Evaluation research is, first and foremost, a process of applying scientific procedures to accumulate reliable and valid evidence in the manner and the extent to which specific activities produce particular effects or outcomes.

If you critically examine these definitions, you will notice that in the evaluation process (as in research methodology) there are certain properties such as validity, reliability and thoroughness.

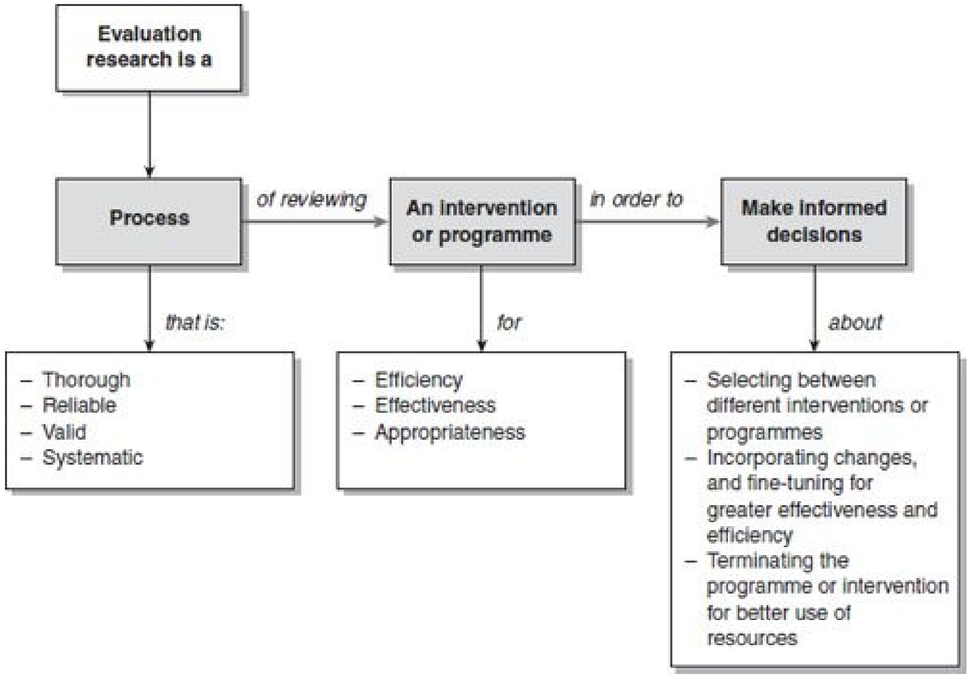


FIGURE 18.1 *The concept of evaluation*

And both processes are designed to collect and analyse information in order to answer research questions. In evaluation research, research questions mainly revolve around various aspects of an intervention, programme or practice, whereas in general research they may relate to any aspect or issue of concern or significance. Evaluation research, therefore, is primarily concerned with a critical examination of such aspects as the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of an intervention. Issues relating to efficiency and effectiveness in relation to the costs and benefits of an intervention are also an integral part of evaluation studies. See Figure 18.1.

Why evaluation?

Suppose you are working in a human service agency. At some point in the course of your work, questions may come to your mind about the appropriateness of your service, its effectiveness, why some people like or benefit from it and others do not, how it can be improved, what sort of workload a service provider can carry and what the cost of delivering the service is. Consumers and administrators of your service may ask you similar questions. You can obtain answers to these questions in a number of ways, ranging from gathering anecdotal evidence to undertaking a systematic study, adhering to the principles of scientific enquiry. Evaluation methodology, which (as mentioned) is based upon research methodology, is one way of finding answers to such questions.

You may come across professionals with differing attitudes towards evaluation. Some attach immense importance to it, while others consider it to be not as important because they think of themselves as solely the providers of a service. Whether or not you become involved in evaluating your practice is dependent upon your interest in examining the practice and upon the demands placed on you by others. However, as a beginner in research methodology, you need to be aware of the importance of evaluation and of the links between it and research methodology. Also, you need to appreciate the significance of evaluation in critically examining a practice for greater efficiency and effectiveness. Even as a service provider you need to be familiar with how your clinical skills can benefit from evaluation processes. Specifically:

- You have a professional and ethical responsibility to provide a good quality of service to your clients. To ensure its effectiveness and efficiency, you need to assess your practice. Knowledge of evaluation research will help you to assess your practice objectively or help you to communicate with an evaluator knowledgeably and professionally about evaluation issues.
- While you, as a professional, have an obligation to provide an effective service to your clients, your clients, on the other hand, have a right to know the quality of the service they are receiving from you. In this age of consumerism, your clients can demand evidence of the quality of your service. In the modern era of consumerism, the emphasis is not only on providing a service but also on how well it is delivered to consumers. In most service professions the concept of so-called evidence-based practice is growing at a very rapid rate. (See also the section on evidence-based practice in Chapter 1.)
- When you are dependent upon outside funding for providing a service, you usually need to provide evidence of the effectiveness of your service for renewal of funding. Nowadays almost every funding body uses evaluation reports as the basis of funding decisions. Quite often an evaluation report from an independent evaluator is required. For effective communication with an outside evaluator, knowledge of evaluation will go a long way.
- Because of the paucity of resources and a greater emphasis on economic rationalism nowadays, there is a growing demand on service providers to demonstrate that the service they are providing is worth the expenditure, and people are getting value for money. Critical examination through evaluation of your service will help you to demonstrate the worth and value of your service.
- How do consumers view your service? What do the consumers of your service feel about it? What do they see as the positive aspects of your service? What, in their opinion, are the negative aspects? How can your service be improved? is your service really helping those for whom it was designed? Is it achieving its objectives? In what ways is it benefiting your clients? To answer such questions you need to evaluate your practice.
- How expensive is your service? What is the cost of providing the service to clients? Is this cost justified? Is the money being well spent?

In the final two points above are some of the questions that you need to answer as a service provider. Skills in evaluation research can help you to answer these questions with greater confidence, objectivity and validity.

Intervention–development–evaluation process

To understand the evaluation process for an intervention, it is important that you also know how it is linked to the development of an intervention. **The intervention–development–evaluation process** is divided into four phases (Figure 18.2):

1. needs assessment;
2. intervention/programme development;
3. intervention/programme execution;
4. intervention/programme evaluation.

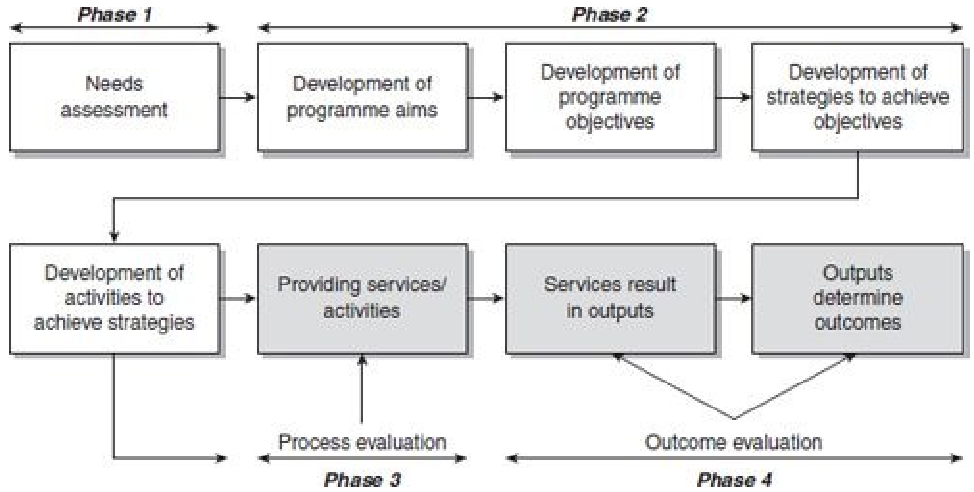


FIGURE 18.2 *The intervention–development–evaluation model*

The development of an intervention usually starts with an assessment of the needs of a community, group or people living in a geographical area (phase 1). Based upon the needs, the aims and objectives for a programme are developed to meet these needs, which in turn become the basis of developing a conceptual intervention programme. This conceptual construction is primarily based on previous experiences, understanding of the problem area, knowledge about how others have dealt with the problem in other places and/or opinion of experts in the area. In the development of this conceptual model, particular attention is given to the formulation of strategies to achieve the objectives of the programme. Next, the precise activities needed to achieve these strategies are identified. Procedures for undertaking these activities are then drawn up. These activities and procedures constitute the contents of a programme (phase 2). Of course, they may need to be streamlined, modified or otherwise changed in the light of experience. Sometimes, a conceptual–intervention model is first 'tested' out as a feasibility study to identify problems and modifications before launching on a full scale. Having fine-tuned the intervention contents, it is executed in accordance with the proposed plan (phase 3). Services/activities constitute programme *inputs*, which result in intervention *outputs*, which in turn produce *outcomes/impacts*. Outputs are the direct products of a programme's activities and are usually measured in terms of volume of tasks accomplished. Outcomes are benefits or changes in individuals or populations that can be attributed to the inputs of a programme. They may manifest as cognitive and/or non-cognitive changes. These may relate to values, attitudes, knowledge, behaviour, change in a situation or any other aspect that came about in an individual following the introduction of a programme. Though some evaluations are focused on the process by which a service is delivered (phase 3), the majority of evaluations are around either outputs or outcomes (phase 4).

Let us take an example: random breath testing (RBT). In RBT the outputs include the number of people tested; the number of awareness campaigns organised; the number of newspaper and television advertisements placed; the number of community forums held; and the number of police officers employed for the task of breath testing. The desired outcomes – the changes sought in people's behaviour and the situation – may include a reduction in alcohol-related road accidents and deaths, and a reduction in the number of people caught driving under the influence of alcohol.

Let us take another example: the counselling service for couples with marital problems. In this example the outputs are the number of sessions with couples and the number of couples seen. The outcomes might be a reduction in the conflicts; greater marital stability with a beneficial effect on the couple's children; a positive effect on work, productivity and income; increased satisfaction with life in general; or smooth separation by the couple from each other.

Perspectives in the classification of evaluation studies

The various types of evaluation can be looked at from two perspectives:

- the *focus of the evaluation;*
- the *philosophical base* that underpins an evaluation.

It is important to remember that these perspectives are *not* mutually exclusive. All evaluations categorised from the viewpoint of focus of evaluation have a philosophical base underpinning them, and so can be classified from within this perspective as well.

For example, an *impact/outcome evaluation* from the focus-of-evaluation point of view can *also* be classified as a *goal-centred evaluation* from the philosophical perspective. In an *outcome evaluation* (classified from the focus-of-evaluation perspective), you can either explore the way an intervention has impacted on the study population, or seek to determine outcomes by establishing whether or not the programme has achieved its intended objective. If the evaluation is from the focus perspective, it is classified as an impact/outcome evaluation, and if the focus is from the philosophical perspective, it is also classified as a goal-centred evaluation. Again, if you determine the impact of a programme/intervention by asking what clients/consumers perceive its effects to have been on them, this is also classified as a *client-centred evaluation* from a philosophical perspective. If you examine every aspect of a programme with regard to its outcome, process and any other aspect, this is categorised as a *holistic evaluation*. Finally, every type of evaluation, process or outcome can be classified as an *improvement-oriented evaluation* from the philosophical perspective as the ultimate aim of any evaluation is to improve an intervention/programme. To avoid confusion between the two perspectives, an integrated picture is provided in Figure 18.3.

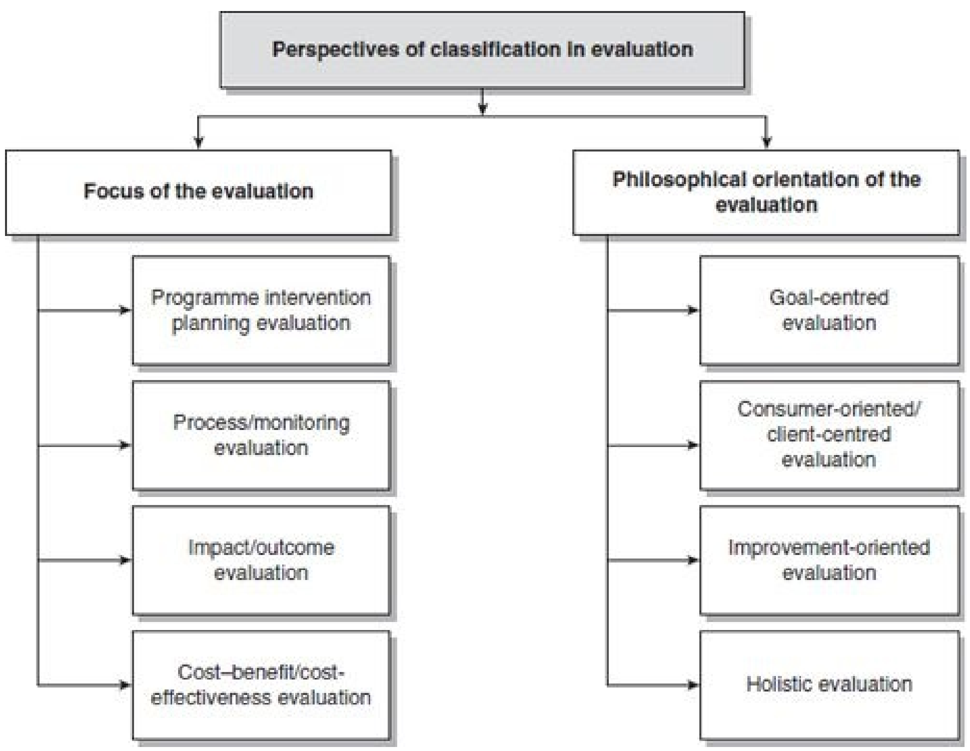


FIGURE 18.3 *Perspectives in the classification of evaluation studies*

Types of evaluation from a *focus* perspective

From the perspective of the focus of evaluation there are four types of evaluation: *programme/intervention planning*, *process/monitoring*, *impact/outcome* and *cost–benefit/cost-effectiveness*. Each type addresses a main and significantly different issue. **Evaluation for planning** addresses the issue of establishing the need for a programme or intervention; **process evaluation** emphasises the evaluation of the process in order to enhance the efficiency of the delivery system; the measurement of outcomes is the focus of an **outcome evaluation**; and the central aim of a cost–benefit evaluation is to put a price tag on an intervention in relation to its benefits. Hence, from this perspective, the classification of an evaluation is primarily dependent upon its focus.

It is important for you to understand the different evaluation questions that each is designed to answer. Table 18.1 will help you to understand the application of each type of evaluation.

Evaluation for programme/intervention planning

In many situations it is desirable to examine the feasibility of starting a programme/intervention by evaluating the nature and extent of a chosen problem. Actually, this type of study evaluates the problem per se: its nature, extent and distribution. Specifically, **programme planning evaluation** includes:

- estimating the extent of the problem – in other words, estimating how many people are likely to need the intervention;
- delineating the characteristics of the people and groups who are likely to require the intervention;
- identifying the likely benefits to be derived from the intervention;
- developing a method of delivering the intervention;
- developing programme contents: services, activities and procedures;
- identifying training needs for service delivery and developing training material;
- estimating the financial requirements of the intervention;
- developing evaluation indicators for the success or failure of the intervention and fixing a timeline for evaluation.

There are a number of methods for evaluating the extent and nature of a problem, and for devising a service delivery manner. The choice of a particular method should depend upon the financial resources available, the time at your disposal and the level of accuracy required in your estimates. Some of the methods are:

- **Community need-assessment surveys** – Need-assessment surveys are quite prevalent to determine the extent of a problem. You use your research skills to undertake a survey in the relevant community to ascertain the number of people who will require a particular service. The number of people requiring a particular service can be extrapolated using demographic information about the community and results from your community sample survey. If done properly, a need-assessment survey can give you a reasonably accurate estimate of the needs of a community or the need for a particular type of service. However, you must keep in mind that surveys are not cheap to undertake.
- **Community forums** – Conducting **community discussion forums** is another method used to find out the extent of the need for a particular service. However, it is important to keep in mind that community forums suffer from a problem in that participants are self-selected; hence, the picture provided may not be accurate. In a community forum not everyone will participate and those who do may have a vested interest for or against the service. If, somehow, you can make sure that all

interest groups are represented in a community forum, it can provide a reasonable picture of the demand for a service. Community forums are comparatively cheap to undertake but you need to examine the usefulness of the information for your purpose. With community forums you cannot ascertain the number of people who may need a particular service, but you can get some indication of the demand for a service and different prevalent community perspectives with respect to the service.

TABLE 18.1 *Types of evaluation from the perspective of its focus and the questions they are designed to answer*

Type of evaluation	Focus of evaluation	Main issue for evaluation	Questions to be answered
Programme/intervention planning evaluation	Planning for programme/ intervention	*Need* for a programme/ intervention	– Is there a need for the proposed programme/ intervention? – If yes, what is its extent? – Who is eligible to receive the service? – What services should be provided and how? – Who should provide the service(s)? – What is the geographical distribution of the target population? – How should the success or failure of the programme/ intervention be assessed? – Where should the services be located? – What are the training needs?
Process/monitoring evaluation	Service delivery	*Efficiency* of the service delivery	– What are the problems with the way the service is being delivered? – How can service delivery be improved? – How satisfied are clients with the way the service is being delivered? – Do staff need additional training? – How satisfied are service providers with the service delivery manner?
Impact/outcome evaluation	Outcomes/ effectiveness	*Effectiveness* of a programme/intervention	– What are the outputs of the programme? – What are the outcomes, both direct and indirect, of the programme? – How has the programme affected clients? – To what extent has the programme achieved the objectives set out at the planning stage? – How satisfied are clients with the benefits from the service? – How satisfied are service providers with the intervention outcomes?
Cost–benefit/ cost-effectiveness evaluation	Cost- effectiveness	Cost of delivering the service	– What is the cost of delivering the service? – Do the effects justify the cost? – Do benefits justify the cost? – As compared to others, what is the cost of per unit of service?

- **Social indicators** – Making use of social indicators, in conjunction with other demographic data, if you have information about them, is another method. However, you have to be careful that these indicators have a high correlation with the problem/need and are accurately recorded. Otherwise, the accuracy of the estimates will be affected.
- **Service records** – There are times when you may be able to use existing service records to identify the unmet needs for a service. For example, if an agency is keeping a record of the cases where it has not been able to provide a service for lack of resources, you may be able to use it to estimate the number of people who are likely to need that service.
- **Focus groups of potential service consumers, service providers and experts** – You can also use focus groups made up of consumers, service providers and experts to establish the need for a service.

Community surveys and social indicators tend to be quantitative, whereas the others tend to be qualitative. Thus they give you different types of information. Service records provide an indication of the gap in service and are not reflective of its need.

It is important to remember that all these methods, except the community needs survey, provide only an indication of the demand for a service in a community. You have to determine how accurately you need to estimate the potential number of users to start a service. A community survey will provide you with the most accurate figures but it could put a strain on the resources. Also, keep in mind that use of multiple methods will produce more accurate estimates.

Process/monitoring evaluation

Process evaluation, also known as monitoring evaluation, focuses on the manner of delivery of a service in order to identify issues and problems concerning delivery. It also identifies ways of improving service delivery procedures for a better and more efficient service. Specifically, process evaluation is used for:

- determining whether or not the delivery of a service is consistent with the original design specifications and, if not, for identifying the reasons and justifications for non-compliance;
- identifying changes needed in the delivery manner for greater coverage and efficiency;
- ascertaining, when an intervention has no impact, whether this is because of the intervention itself or the manner in which it is being delivered;
- determining whether or not an intervention is reaching the appropriate target population.

Process evaluation includes evaluating the:

- extent of participation of the target population;
- delivery manner of a programme/intervention.

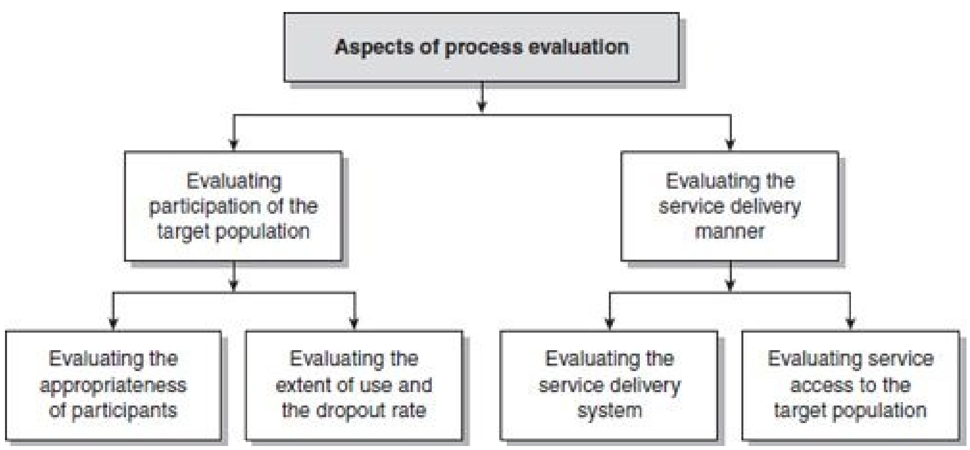


FIGURE 18.4 *Aspects of process evaluation*

Evaluating the participation of the target population in turn involves: (1) ascertaining the appropriateness of the clients for the service in question; and (2) establishing the total number of clients and the dropout rate among them. Evaluating the service delivery manner, in the same way, includes two tasks: (1) examining the procedures used in providing the service; and (2) examining the issues relating to the accessibility of the service to potential clients (Figure 18.4).

Evaluating participation of the target population

In an evaluation study designed to examine the process of delivering an intervention, it is important to examine the appropriateness of the users of the service because, sometimes, some people use a service even though they do not strictly fall within the inclusion criteria. In other words, in evaluation studies it is important to determine not just the number of users, but whether or not they are eligible users. Determining the appropriate use of an intervention is an integral part of an evaluation.

It is also important to ascertain the total number of users of a programme/intervention because it provides an indication of the need for a service, and to find out the number of dropouts because this establishes the extent of the rejection of the service for any reason. There are a number of procedures for evaluating the participation of a target population in an intervention:

- **Percentage of users** – The acceptance of a programme by the target population is one of the important indicators of a need for it: the higher the acceptance, the greater the need for the intervention. Some judge the desirability of a programme by the number of users alone. Hence, as an evaluator, you can examine the total number of users and, if possible, calculate this as a percentage of the total target population. However, you should be careful using the percentage of users in isolation as an indicator of the popularity of a programme. People may be unhappy and dissatisfied with a service, yet use it simply because there is no other option available to them. If used with other indicators, such as consumer satisfaction or in relation to evidence of the effectiveness of a programme, it can provide a better indication of its acceptance.
- **Percentage of eligible users of a service** – Service records usually contain information on service users that may include data on their eligibility for the service. An analysis of this information will provide you with a percentage of eligible users of the service: the higher the percentage of eligible users, the more positive the evaluation. That is,

  $$\frac{\text{no. of eligible users} \times 100}{\text{no. of total users}} = \text{percentage of eligible users}$$

  You can also undertake a survey of the consumers of a service in order to ascertain the percentage of eligible users.
- **Percentage of dropouts** – The dropout rate from a service is reflective of the satisfaction level of consumers with the programme. A higher rate indicates either inappropriate service content or flaws in the way the service is being delivered: it does not establish whether the problem is with the delivery manner or the intervention content. However, the figure will provide you with an overall indication of the level of satisfaction of consumers with the service: the higher the dropout rate, the higher the level of dissatisfaction, either with the contents of a service (its relevance to the needs of the population) or the way it is being delivered.

  $$\frac{\text{no. of dropouts from a programme} \times 100}{\text{no. of total programme acceptors*}} = \text{dropout rate}$$

  *Acceptors are ever-users of a service.

- **Survey of the consumers of a service** – If service records do not include data regarding client eligibility for a service, you can undertake a survey of ever-users/acceptors of the service to ascertain their eligibility for the service. From the ever-users surveyed, you can also determine the dropout rate among them. In addition, you can find out many other aspects of the evaluation, such as client satisfaction, problems and issues with the service, or how to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. How well you do this survey is dependent upon your knowledge of research methodology and availability of resources.

- **Survey of the target population** – Target population surveys, in addition to providing information about the extent of appropriate use of a service, also provide data on the extent of acceptance of a service among those for whom it was designed. The proportion of people who have accepted an intervention can be calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{no. of ever-users of the service} \times 100}{\text{no. of eligible individuals surveyed}} = \text{acceptance of a service}$$

- **Survey of dropouts** – Dropouts are an extremely useful source of information for identifying ways of improving an intervention. These are the people who have gone through an intervention, have experienced both positives and negatives, and have then decided to withdraw. Talking to them can provide you with their first-hand experience of the programme. They are the people who can provide you with information on possible problems, either with the content of an intervention or with the way it has been delivered. They are also an excellent source of suggestions on how to improve a service. A survey, focus group discussion or in-depth interviews can provide valuable information about the strengths as well as weaknesses of a programme. Issues raised by them and suggestions made may become the basis for improving that intervention.
- **Survey of non-users of a service** – Whereas a group of dropouts can provide extremely useful information about the problems with an intervention, non-users are important in understanding why some, for whom the programme was designed, have not accepted it. Choose any method, quantitative or qualitative, to collect information from them. Of course it could be a problem to identify the non-users in a community.

Evaluating service delivery manner

There are situations when a programme may not have achieved its intended goals. In such situations, there are two possible causes: the content of the intervention and the way it is being delivered. It is to make sure that an intervention is being delivered effectively that you undertake process evaluation. It involves identifying problems with the way a service is being delivered to consumers or finding ways of improving the delivery system. Evaluating the delivery manner of a programme is a very important aspect of process evaluation. There are a number of issues in delivering a service that may impact upon its delivery manner and process evaluation considers them. Some of the issues are:

- the delivery manner per se;
- the contents of the service and its relevance to the needs of consumers;
- the adequacy and quality of training imparted to service providers to enable them to undertake various tasks;
- staff morale, motivation and interest in the programme, and ways of enhancing these;
- the expectations of consumers;
- resources available and their management;
- issues relating to access to services by the target population;
- ways of further improving the delivery of a service.

A process evaluation aims at studying some or all of these issues. There are a number of strategies that are used in process evaluation. The purpose for which you are going to use the findings should determine whether you adopt a quantitative or qualitative approach. Considerations that determine the use of qualitative or quantitative methods in general also apply in evaluation studies. Methods that can be used in undertaking a process evaluation are:

- **Opinion of consumers** – One of the best indicators of the quality of a service is how the consumers of that service feel about it. They are best placed to identify problems in the delivery manner, to point out its strengths and weaknesses, and to tell you how the service can be improved to meet their needs. Simply by gathering the experiences of consumers with respect to utilisation of a service you can gain valuable information about its strengths and weaknesses. Consumer surveys give you an insight into what the consumers of a service like and do not like about a service. In the present age of consumerism it is important to take their opinions into consideration when designing, delivering or changing a service.

  If you want to adopt a qualitative approach to evaluation, you can use in-depth interviewing, focus group discussions and/or target population forums as ways of collecting information about the issues mentioned above. If you prefer to use a quantitative approach you can undertake a survey, giving consideration to all the aspects of quantitative research methodology including sample size and its selection, and methods of data collection. Keep in mind that qualitative methods will provide you with a diversity of opinions and issues but will not tell you the extent of that diversity. If you need to determine the extent of these issues, you should combine qualitative and quantitative approaches.
- **Opinions of service providers** – Equally important in process evaluation studies are the opinions of those engaged in providing a service. Service providers are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the way in which a programme is being delivered. They are also well informed about what could be done to improve inadequacies. As an evaluator, you will find invaluable information from service providers for improving the efficiency of a service. Again, you can use qualitative or quantitative methods for data collection and analysis.
- **Time-and-motion studies** – Time-and-motion studies, both quantitative and qualitative, can provide important information about the delivery process of a service. The dominant technique involves observing the users of a service as they go through the process of using it. You, as an evaluator, passively observe each interaction and then draw inferences about the strengths and weaknesses of service delivery.

  In a qualitative approach to evaluation you mainly use observation as a method of data collection, whereas in a quantitative approach you develop more structured tools for data collection (even for observation) and subject the data to appropriate statistical analysis in order to make inferences.
- **Functional analysis studies** – Analysis of the functions performed by service providers is another approach people use in the search for increased efficiency in service delivery. An observer, with expertise in programme content and the process of delivering a service, follows a client as s/he goes through the process of receiving it. The observer keeps note of all the activities undertaken by the service provider, with the time spent on each of them. Such observations become the basis for judging the desirability of an activity as well as the justification for the time spent on it, which then becomes the basis of identifying 'waste' in the process.

  Again, you can use qualitative or quantitative methods of data collection. You can adopt very flexible methods of data collection or highly structured ones. You should be aware that observations can be very structured or unstructured. The author was involved in a functional analysis study which involved two-minute observations of activities of health workers in a community health programme.

- **Panel of experts** – Another method that is used to study the delivery process of a service is to ask experts in the area of that service to make recommendations about the process. These experts may use various methods (quantitative or qualitative) to gather information, and supplement it with their own knowledge. They then share their experiences and assessments with each other in order to come up with recommendations.

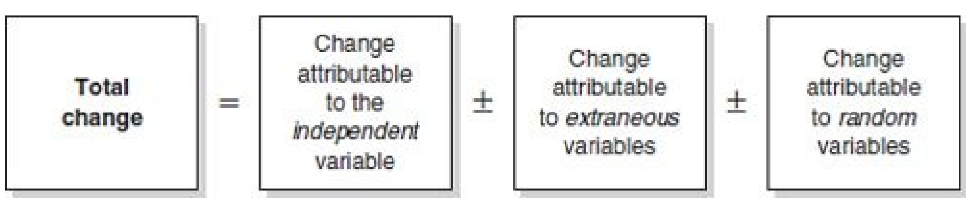
The use of multiple methods may provide more detailed and possibly better information but would depend upon the resources at your disposal and the purpose of your evaluation. Your skills as an evaluator lie in selecting a method (or methods) that best suits the purpose of evaluation within the given resources.

Impact/outcome evaluation

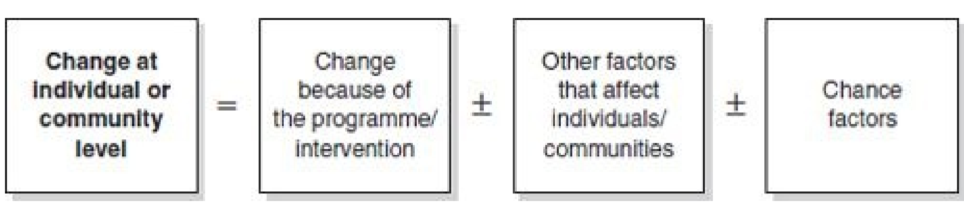
Impact or outcome evaluation is one of the most widely practised types of evaluation. It is used to assess what changes can be attributed to the introduction of a particular intervention, programme or policy. It establishes causality between an intervention and its impact, and estimates the magnitude of this change(s). It plays a central role in decision making by practitioners, managers, administrators and planners who wish to determine whether or not an intervention has achieved its desired objectives in order to make an informed decision about its continuation, termination or alteration. Many funding organisations base their decisions about further funding for programmes on impact evaluations. Specifically, an outcome evaluation is for the purpose of:

- establishing causal links between intervention inputs and outcomes;
- measuring the magnitude of these outcomes;
- determining whether a programme or intervention has achieved its intended goals;
- finding out the unintended effects, if any, of an intervention;
- comparing the impacts of an intervention with an alternative one in order to choose the more effective of the two.

As you are aware, in any cause-and-effect relationship, in addition to the cause there are many other factors that can affect the relationship. (For details see Chapter 7.) Just to refresh your memory:



In relation to a programme or intervention, this is



This **theory of causality** is of particular relevance to impact assessment studies. In determining the impact of an intervention, it is important to realise that the changes produced by an intervention may not be solely because of the intervention. Sometimes, other factors (extraneous variables) may play a more important role than the intervention in bringing about changes in the dependent variable. When you evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention, without comparing it to that of a control group, your findings will include the effects of extraneous variables. If you want to separate out the respective contributions of extraneous variables and the intervention, you need to use a control study design.

There are many designs from which you can choose in conducting an **impact assessment evaluation**. Impact assessment studies range from descriptive ones – in which you describe people's experiences and perceptions of the effectiveness of an intervention – to random–control–blind experiments. Again, your choice of a particular design is dependent upon the purpose of the evaluation and resources available. Some of the commonly used designs are:

- **After-only design** – Though technically inappropriate, **after-only design** is a commonly used design in evaluation studies. It measures the impact of a programme or intervention (after it has occurred) without having a baseline. The effectiveness of the intervention is judged on the basis of the current picture of the state of evaluation indicators. It relies on indicators such as:

    - number of users of the service;
    - number of dropouts from the service;
    - satisfaction of clients with the service;
    - stories/experiences of clients that changed them;
    - assessment made by experts in the area;
    - the opinions of service providers.

  It is on the basis of findings about these outcome indicators that a decision about continuation, termination or alterations in an intervention is made. One of the major drawbacks of this design is that it does not measure change that can be attributed to the intervention as such, since (as mentioned) it has neither a baseline nor a control group to compare results with. However, it provides the current picture in relation to the outcome indicators. This design is therefore inappropriate when you are interested in studying the impact of an intervention per se.
- **Before-and-after design** – The **before-and-after design** is technically sound and appropriate for measuring the impact of an intervention. There are two ways of establishing the baseline. One way is where the baseline is determined before the introduction of an intervention, which requires advance planning; and the other is where the baseline is established retrospectively, either from previous service records or through recall by clients of their situation before the introduction of the intervention. Retrospective construction of the baseline may produce less accurate data than after the data collection and hence may not be comparable. However, in the absence of anything better, it does provide some basis of comparison.

  As you may recall, one of the drawbacks of this design is that the change measured includes change brought about by extraneous and change variables. Hence, this design, though acceptable and better than the after-only design, still has a technical problem in terms of evaluation studies. Also, it is more expensive than the after-only design.
- **Experimental–control design** – The before-and-after study, with a control group, is probably the closest to a technically correct design for impact assessment of an intervention. One of the biggest

strengths of this design is that it enables you to isolate the impact of independent and extraneous variables. However, it adds the problem of comparability between control and experimental groups. Sometimes this problem of comparability can be overcome by forming the groups through randomisation. Unfortunately, complexity in its execution and increased cost restrict the use of this design for the average evaluation study. Also, in many situations it may not be possible to find or construct a suitable control group.

- **Comparative study design** – The **comparative study design** is used when evaluating two or more interventions. For comparative studies you can follow any of the above designs; that is, you can have a comparative study using *after-only*, *before-and-after* or *experimental–control* design.
- **Reflexive control design** – To overcome the problem of comparability in different groups, sometimes researchers treat data collected during the non-intervention period to represent a control group, and information collected after the introduction of the intervention as if it pertained to an experimental group (Figure 18.5).

  In the **reflexive control design**, comparison between *data collection 2* and *data collection 1* provides information for the control group, while comparison between *data collection 3* and *data collection 2* provides data for the experimental group. One of the main advantages of this design is that you do not need to ensure the comparability of two groups. However, if there are rapid changes in the study population over time, and if the outcome variables are likely to be affected significantly, use of this design could be problematic.

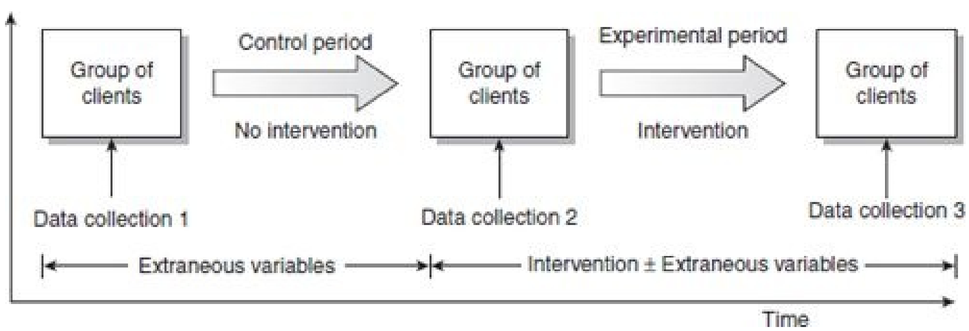


FIGURE 18.5 *Reflexive control design*

- **Interrupted time-series design** – In the **interrupted time-series design** you study a group of people before and after the introduction of an intervention. It is like the before-and-after design, except that you have multiple data collections at different time intervals to constitute an aggregated before-and-after picture (Figure 18.6). The design is based upon the assumption that one set of data is not sufficient to establish, with a reasonable degree of certainty and accuracy, the before-and-after situations.

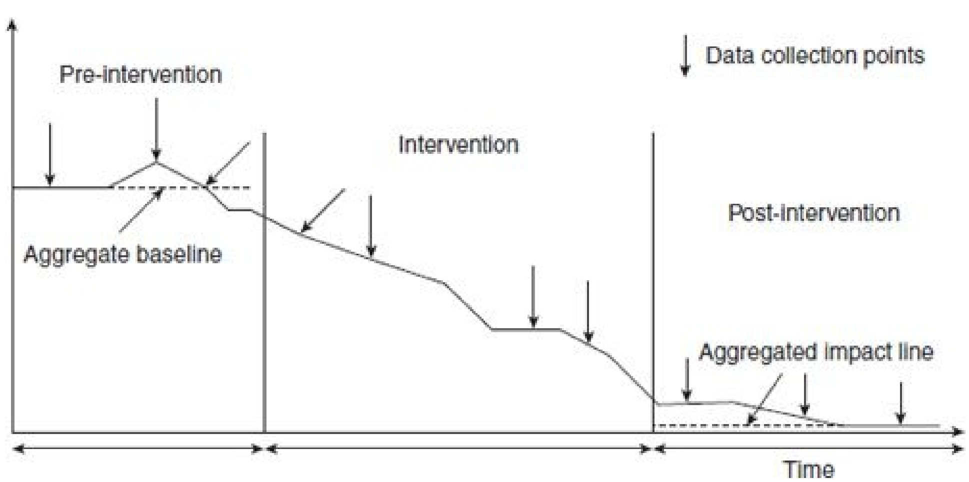


FIGURE 18.6 *Interrupted time-series design*

- **Replicated cross-sectional design** – The **replicated cross-sectional design** studies clients at different stages of an intervention, and is appropriate for those interventions that take new clients on a continuous or periodic basis. See Figure 18.7. This design is based on the assumption that those who are currently at the termination stage of an intervention are similar in terms of the nature and extent of the problem to those who are currently at the intake stage.

  In order to ascertain the change that can be attributed to an intervention, a sample at the intake and termination stages of the programme is selected, so that information can be collected pertaining to pre-situations and post-situations with respect to the problem for which the intervention is being sought. To evaluate the pattern of impact, sometimes researchers collect data at one or more intermediary stages.

These designs vary in sophistication and so do the evaluation instruments. Choice of design is difficult and (as mentioned earlier) it depends upon the purpose and resources available.

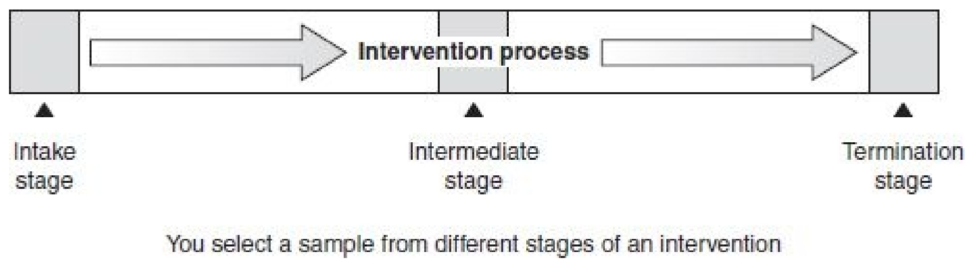


FIGURE 18.7 *Replicated cross-sectional design*

Another difficulty is to decide when, during the intervention process, to undertake the evaluation. How do you know that the intervention has made its impact? One major difficulty in evaluating social programmes revolves around the question: was the change a product of the intervention or did it come from a consumer's relationship with a service provider? Many social programmes are accepted because of the confidence consumers develop in a service provider. In evaluation studies you need to keep in mind the importance of a service provider in bringing about change in individuals.

Cost–benefit/cost-effectiveness evaluation

While knowledge about the process of service delivery and its outcomes is highly useful for an efficient and effective programme, in some cases it is critical to be informed about how intervention costs compare with outcomes. In today's world, which is characterised by scarce resources and economic rationalism, it is important to justify a programme in relation to its cost. Cost–benefit analysis provides a framework for relating costs to benefits in terms of a common unit of measurement, monetary or otherwise. Specifically, cost–benefit analysis or **cost-effectiveness evaluation** is important because it helps to:

- put limited resources to optimal use;
- decide which of two equally effective interventions to replicate on a larger scale.

Cost–benefit analysis follows an input/output model, the quality of which depends upon the ability to identify accurately and measure all intervention inputs and outputs. Compared with technical interventions, such as those within engineering, social interventions are more difficult to subject to cost–

benefit analysis. This is primarily because of the difficulties in accurately identifying and measuring inputs and outputs, and then converting them to a common monetary unit. Some of the problems in applying cost–benefit analysis to social programmes are outlined below:

- What constitutes an input for an intervention? There are direct and indirect inputs. Identifying these can sometimes be very difficult. Even if you have been able to identify them, the next problem is putting a price tag on each of them.
- Similarly, the outputs or benefits of an intervention need to be identified and measured. Like inputs, benefits can also be direct and indirect. In addition, a programme may have short-term as well as long-term benefits. How do you cost the various benefits of a programme? Another complexity is the need to consider benefits from the perspectives of different stakeholders.
- The main problem in cost–benefit analysis is the difficulty in converting inputs as well as outputs to a common unit. In social programmes, it often becomes difficult even to identify outputs, let alone measure and then convert them to a common unit of measurement.

Types of evaluation from a *philosophical* perspective

From a philosophical perspective, there are no specific models for or methods of evaluation. You use the same methods and models but the required information is gathered from different people or aspects depending upon the philosophy that you subscribe to. Stufflebeam and Shinkfield's book *Systematic Evaluation: A Self-Instructional Guide to Theory and Practice* is an excellent source to acquaint you with these perspectives. Types of evaluation categorised on the basis of philosophies, mentioned below, are dealt with in greater detail in their book and it is highly recommended that you refer to that if you want to gain a better appreciation of these perspectives. On the basis of these perspectives, there are four types of evaluation. Again, you should keep in mind that this classification and the classification developed on the basis of the *focus of evaluation* are not mutually exclusive.

Goal-centred/objective-oriented evaluation

This approach is based upon the philosophy that the success or failure of an intervention should be based upon the extent of congruence between the objectives of an intervention and its actual outcomes. This approach studies outcomes to determine the achievement of objectives, and congruence between the two is regarded as the sole determinant of success or failure. One of the main criticisms of **objective-oriented evaluation** is that it assesses the effectiveness of a programme without explaining the reasons for it.

Basically, the process of evaluation involves, firstly, identification of the desired goals of an intervention and, secondly, the use of a process to measure their success or failure. Again, you can use either qualitative or quantitative methods to achieve this.

Consumer-oriented/client-centred evaluation

The core of this philosophy rests on the assumption that assessment of the value or merit of an intervention – including its effectiveness, outcomes, impact and relevance – should be judged from the perspective of the consumer. Consumers, according to the philosophy of **consumer-oriented**

evaluation, are the best judges of a programme.

Client-centred evaluations, again, may use qualitative or quantitative methods to find out how clients feel about various aspects of an intervention. You can even use a mix of the two to find out consumers' perceptions and opinions.

Improvement-oriented evaluation

The basic philosophy behind improvement-oriented evaluation is that an evaluation should foster improvement. 'Not to prove but to improve' seems to be the central theme of such evaluations. The focus is to study the context in order to help improve an intervention content – the process rather than outcomes.

Again, a multiplicity of methods can be used to undertake such evaluation.

Holistic/illuminative evaluation

The primary concern of **holistic research** or **illuminative evaluation** is description and interpretation, rather than measurement and prediction. It fits with the social–anthropological paradigm, acknowledging as it does historical, cultural and social factors when evaluating an intervention. The aim is to study a programme in all its aspects: how it operates, how it is influenced by various contexts, how it is applied, how those directly involved view its strengths and weaknesses, and what the experiences are of those who are affected by it. In summary, it tries to illuminate a complex array of questions, issues and factors, and to identify procedures that give both desirable and undesirable results. So a holistic/illuminative evaluation tries to understand issues relating to an intervention from many perspectives: it seeks to view the performance of a programme in its totality.

An evaluation can be conducted from any one of the above philosophical perspectives. To us, these are perspectives rather than evaluation models, but some use them as types of evaluation. The aim of this section has been to acquaint you with some of these perspectives.

Undertaking an evaluation: the process

Like the research methodology model, which forms the basis of this book, the evaluation process is also based upon certain operational steps. It is important for you to remember that the order in the write-up of these steps is primarily to make it easier for you to understand the process. Once you are familiar with these steps, their order can be changed.

Step 1: Determining the purpose of evaluation

In a research study you formulate your research problem before developing a methodology. In an evaluation study too, you need to identify the purpose of undertaking it and develop your objectives before venturing into it. It is important to seek answers to questions such as: 'Why do I want to do this evaluation?' and 'For what purpose would I use the findings?' Specifically, you need to consider the following matters, and to identify their relevance and application to your situation. Is the evaluation being undertaken to do the following?

- Identify and solve problems in the delivery process of a service.
- Increase efficiency of the service delivery manner.
- Determine the impacts of the intervention.
- Train staff for better performance.
- Work out an optimal workload for staff.
- Find out about client satisfaction with the service.
- Seek further funding.
- Justify continuation of the programme.
- Resolve issues so as to improve the quality of the service.
- Test out different intervention strategies.
- Choose between the interventions.
- Estimate the cost of providing the service.

It is important that you identify the purpose of your evaluation and find answers to your reasons for undertaking it with the active involvement and participation of the various stakeholders. It is also important that all stakeholders – clients, service providers, service managers, funding organisations and you, as an evaluator – agree with the aims of the evaluation. Make sure that all stakeholders also agree that the findings of the evaluation will not be used for any purpose other than those agreed upon. This agreement is important in ensuring that the findings will be acceptable to all, and for developing confidence among those who are to provide the required information do so freely. If your respondents are sceptical about the evaluation, you will not obtain reliable information from them.

Having decided on the purpose of your evaluation, the next step is to develop a set of objectives that will guide it.

Step 2: Developing objectives or evaluation questions

As in a research project, you need to develop evaluation questions, which will become the foundation for the evaluation. Well-articulated objectives bring clarity and focus to the whole evaluation process. They also reduce the chances of disagreement later among various parties.

Some organisations may simply ask you ‘to evaluate the programme’, whereas others may be much more specific. The same may be the situation if you are involved in evaluating your own intervention. If you have been given specific objectives or you are in a situation where you are clear about the objectives, you do not need to go through this step. However, if the brief is broad, or you are not clear about the objectives in your own situation, you need to construct for yourself and others a ‘meaning’ of *evaluation*.

As you know, evaluation can mean different things to different people. To serve the purpose of evaluation from the perspectives of different stakeholders, it is important to *involve all stakeholders in the development of evaluation objectives and to seek their agreement with them*. You need to follow the same process as for a research study (Chapter 4). The examples in Figure 18.8 may help you to understand more about objective formulation.

Example: Developing evaluation objectives: examples

Recently the author was asked to undertake two evaluations. For one, the brief was ‘To evaluate the principle of community responsiveness in the delivery of health in … (name of the state)’, and for the other it was ‘To evaluate … (name of the model) service delivery model in … (name of the region)’.

Evaluating a programme: Example One

For the first evaluation, after having initial discussions with various stakeholders, it was discovered that understanding of the principle of ‘community responsiveness’ was extremely vague and varied among different people. Also, there were neither any instructions about how to achieve community responsiveness nor any training programme for the purpose. A few people, responsible for ensuring the implementation of the principle, had no idea about its implementation. Our first question was: ‘Can we evaluate something about which those responsible for implementation are not clear, and for which there is no specific strategy in place?’ The obvious answer was ‘no’. We discussed with the sponsors of the evaluation what questions they had in mind when asking us for the evaluation. On the basis of our discussion with them and our understanding of their reasons for requesting the evaluation, we proposed that the evaluation be carried out in two phases. For the first phase, the aim of the evaluation should be to define ‘community responsiveness’, identify/develop/explore operational strategies to achieve it, and identify the indicators of its success or otherwise. During the second phase, an evaluation to measure the impact of implementation of the community responsiveness strategies was proposed. Our proposal was accepted. We developed the following objectives in consultation with the various stakeholders.

Evaluation of the principle of community responsiveness in health Phase One

Main objective:
To develop a model for implementing the principle of community responsiveness in the delivery of health care in … (name of the state).

Specific objectives:

1. To find out how the principle of community responsiveness is understood by health planners, administrators, managers, service providers and consumers, and to develop an operational definition of the term for the department.
2. To identify, with the participation of stakeholders, strategies to implement the concept of community responsiveness in the delivery of health services.
3. To develop a set of indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used to achieve community responsiveness.
4. To identify appropriate methodologies that are acceptable to stakeholders for measuring effectiveness indicators.

Phase Two

Main objective:
To evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used to achieve the principle of community responsiveness in the delivery of health services.

Subobjectives:

1. To determine the impact of community responsiveness strategies on community participation in decision making about health issues affecting the community.
2. To find out the opinions of the various stakeholders on the degree to which the provision of community responsiveness in the delivery of health services has been/is being observed.
3. To find out the extent of involvement of the community in decision making in issues concerning the community and its attitude towards involvement.

Evaluating a programme: Example Two

Now let us take the second study. In this case the service delivery model was well developed and the evaluation brief was clear in terms of its expectations; that is, the objective was to evaluate the model’s effectiveness. Before starting the evaluation, the following objectives were developed in consultation with the steering committee, which had representatives from all stakeholder groups.

Remember, it is important that your objectives be unambiguous, clear and specific, and that they are written using verbs that express your operational intentions.

The … Model

Main objective:

To evaluate the effectiveness of the … (name of the model) developed by … (name of the office).

Subobjectives:

1. To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the model as perceived by various stakeholders.
2. To find out the attitudes of consumers, service providers and managers, and relevant community agencies towards the model.
3. To determine the extent of reduction, if any, in the number of children in the care of the department since the introduction of the model.
4. To determine the impact of the model on the number of Child Concern Reports and Child Maltreatment Allegations.
5. To assess the ability of the model to build the capacity of consumers and service providers to deal with problems in the area of child protection.
6. To recommend strategies to overcome problems, if any, with the model.
7. To estimate the cost of delivering services in accordance with the model to a family.

Step 3: Converting concepts into indicators into variables

In evaluation, as well as in other research studies, often we use concepts to describe our intentions. For example, we say that we are seeking to evaluate outcomes, effectiveness, impact or satisfaction. The meaning ascribed to such words may be clear to you but may differ markedly from the understanding of others. This is because these terms involve subjective impressions. They need operational definitions in terms of their measurement in order to develop a uniform understanding. When you use concepts, the next problem you need to deal with is the development of a ‘meaning’ for each concept that describes them appropriately for the contexts in which they are being applied. The meaning of a concept in a specific situation is arrived at by developing **indicators**. To develop indicators, you must answer questions such as: ‘What does this concept mean?’, ‘When can I say that the programme is effective, or has brought about a change, or consumers or service providers are satisfied?’ and ‘On what basis should I conclude that an intervention has been effective?’ Answers to such questions become your indicators and their measurement and assessment become the basis of judgement about effectiveness, impact or satisfaction. Indicators are specific, observable, measurable characteristics or changes that can be attributed to the programme or intervention.

A critical challenge to an evaluator in outcome measurement is identifying and deciding what indicators to use in order to assess how well the programme being evaluated has done regarding an outcome. Remember that not all changes or impacts of a programme may be reflected by one indicator. In many situations you need to have multiple indicators to make an assessment of the success or failure of a programme. Figure 18.9 shows the process of converting concepts into questions that you ask of your respondents.

Some indicators are easy to measure, whereas others may be difficult. For example, an indicator such as the number of programme users is easy to measure, whereas a programme’s impact on self-esteem is more difficult to measure.

In order to assess the impact of an intervention, different types of effectiveness indicators can be used. These indicators may be either qualitative or quantitative, and their measurement may range from subjective–descriptive impressions to objective–measurable–discrete changes. If you are inclined more towards qualitative studies, you may use in-depth interviewing, observation or focus groups to establish whether or not there have been changes in perceptions, attitudes or behaviour among the recipients of a programme with respect to these indicators. In this case, changes are as perceived by your respondents: there is, as such, no measurement involved. On the other hand, if you prefer a quantitative approach, you may use various methods to measure change in the indicators using *interval* or *ratio* scales. In all the designs that we have discussed above in outcome evaluation, you may use qualitative or quantitative indicators to measure outcomes.

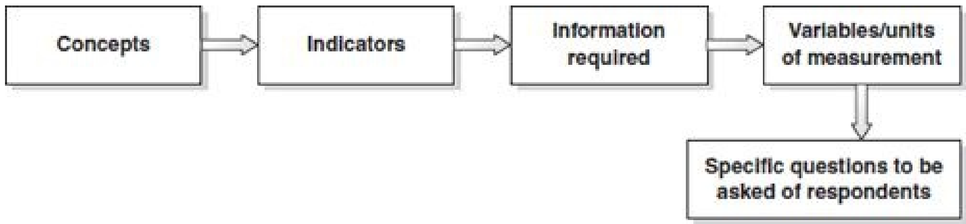


FIGURE 18.8 *Converting concepts into indicators into variables*

Now let us take an example to illustrate the process of converting concepts to questions. Suppose you are working in a department concerned with protection of children and are testing a new model of service delivery. Let us further assume that your model is to achieve greater participation and involvement of children, their families and non-statutory organisations working in the community in decision making about children. Your assumption is that with their involvement and participation in developing the proposed intervention strategies, higher compliance will result, which, in turn, will result in the achievement of the desired goals.

As part of your evaluation of the model, you may choose a number of indicators such as the impact on the:

- number of children under the care of the department/agency;
- number of children returned to the family or the community for care;
- number of reported cases of ‘Child Maltreatment Allegations’;
- number of reported cases of ‘Child Concern Reports’;
- extent of involvement of the family and community agencies in the decision-making process about a child.

You may also choose indicators such as the attitude of:

- children, where appropriate, and family members towards their involvement in the decision-making process;
- service providers and service managers towards the usefulness of the model;
- non-statutory organisations towards their participation in the decision-making process;
- various stakeholders towards the ability of the model to build the capacity of consumers of the service for self-management;
- family members towards their involvement in the decision-making process.

The scales used in the measurement determine whether an indicator will be considered as ‘soft’ or ‘hard’. Attitude towards an issue can be measured using well-advanced attitudinal scales or by simply asking a respondent to give his/her opinion. The first method will yield a hard indicator while the second will provide a soft one. Similarly, a change in the number of children, if asked as an opinion question, will be treated as a soft indicator.

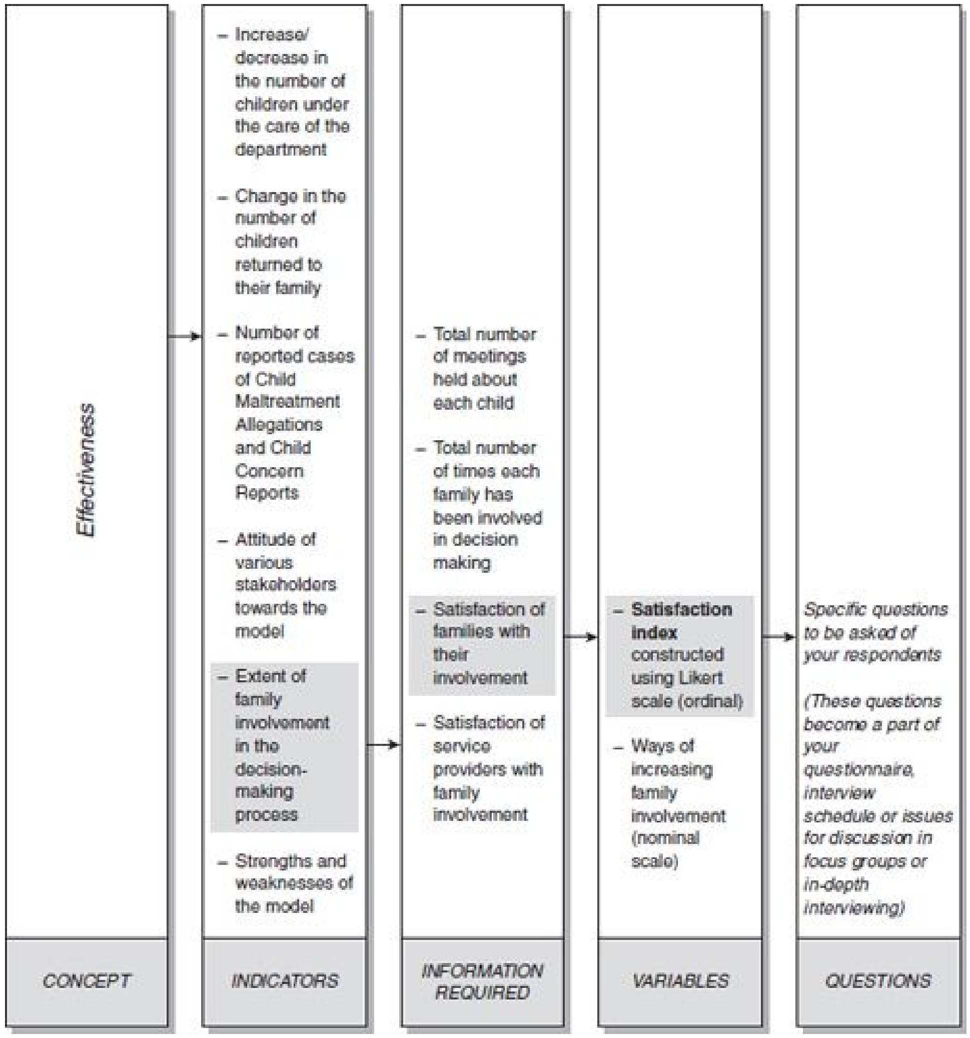


FIGURE 18.9 *An example of converting concepts into questions*

Figure 18.10 summarises the process of converting concepts into questions, using the example described above. Once you have understood the logic behind this operationalisation, you will find it easier to apply in other similar situations.

Step 4: Developing evaluation methodology

As with a non-evaluative study, you need to identify the design that best suits the objectives of your evaluation, keeping in mind the resources at your disposal. In most evaluation studies the emphasis is on 'constructing' a comparative picture, before and after the introduction of an intervention, in relation to the indicators you have selected. On the basis of your knowledge about study designs and the designs discussed in this chapter, you propose one that is most suitable for your situation. Also, as part of evaluation methodology, do not forget to consider other aspects of the process such as:

- From whom will you collect the required information?
- How will you identify your respondents?
- Are you going to select a sample of respondents? If yes, how and how large will it be?
- How will you make initial contact with your potential respondents?
- How will you seek the informed consent of your respondents for their participation in the

evaluation?
- How will the needed information be collected?
- How will you take care of the ethical issues confronting your evaluation?
- How will you maintain the anonymity of the information obtained?
- What is the relevance of the evaluation for your respondents or others in a similar situation?

You need to consider all these aspects before you start collecting data.

Step 5: Collecting data

As in a research study, data collection is the most important and time-consuming phase. As you know, the quality of evaluation findings is entirely dependent upon the data collected. Hence, the importance of data collection cannot be overemphasised. Whether quantitative or qualitative methods are used for data collection, it is essential to ensure that quality is maintained in the process.

You can have a highly structured evaluation, placing great emphasis on indicators and their measurement, or you can opt for an unstructured and flexible enquiry: as mentioned earlier, the decision is dependent upon the purpose of your evaluation. For exploratory purposes, flexibility and a lack of structure are an asset, whereas, if the purpose is to formulate a policy, measure the impact of an intervention or to work out the cost of an intervention, a greater structure and standardisation and less flexibility are important.

Step 6: Analysing data

As with research in general, the way you can analyse the data depends upon the way it was collected and the purpose for which you are going to use the findings. For policy decisions and decisions about programme termination or continuation, you need to ascertain the magnitude of change, based on a reasonable sample size. Hence, your data needs to be subjected to a statistical framework of analysis. However, if you are evaluating a process or procedure, you can use an interpretive frame of analysis.

Step 7: Writing an evaluation report

As previously stated, the quality of your work and the impact of your findings are greatly dependent upon how well you communicate them to your readers. Your report is the only basis of judgement for an average reader. Hence, you need to pay extra attention to your writing.

As for a research report, there are different writing styles. In the author's opinion you should communicate your findings under headings that reflect the objectives of your evaluation. It is also suggested that the findings be accompanied by recommendations pertaining to them. Your report should also have an executive summary of your findings and recommendations.

Step 8: Sharing findings with stakeholders

A very important aspect of any evaluation is sharing the findings with the various groups of stakeholders. It is a good idea to convene a group comprising all stakeholders to communicate what your evaluation has found. Be open about your findings and resist pressure from any interest group. Objectively and honestly communicate what your evaluation has found. It is of utmost importance that you adhere to ethical principles and the professional code of conduct.

As you have seen, the process of a research study and that of an evaluation is almost the same. The only difference is the use of certain models in the measurement of the effectiveness of an intervention. It is therefore important for you to know about research methodology before undertaking an evaluation.

Involving stakeholders in evaluation

Most evaluations have a number of stakeholders, ranging from consumers to experts in the area, including service providers and managers. It is important that all categories of stakeholder be involved at all stages of an evaluation. Failure to involve any group may hinder success in completion of the evaluation and seriously affect confidence in your findings. It is therefore important that you identify all stakeholders and seek their involvement and participation in the evaluation. This ensures that they feel a part of the evaluation process, which, in turn, markedly enhances the probability of their accepting the findings. The following steps outline a process for involving stakeholders in an evaluation study.

Step 1	**Identifying stakeholders.** First of all, talk with managers, planners, programme administrators, service providers and the consumers of the programme either individually or collectively, and identify who they think are the direct and indirect stakeholders. Having collected this information, share it with all groups of stakeholders to see if anyone has been left out. Prepare a list of all stakeholders making sure it is acceptable to all significant ones. If there are any disagreements, it is important to resolve them.
Step 2	**Involving stakeholders.** In order to develop a common perspective with respect to various aspects of the evaluation, it is important that different categories of stakeholder be actively involved in the whole process of evaluation from the identification of their concerns to the sharing of its findings. In particular, it is important to involve them in developing a framework for evaluation, selecting the evaluation indicators, and developing procedures and tools for their measurement.
Step 3	**Developing a common perspective among stakeholders towards the evaluation.** Different stakeholders may have different understandings of the word ‘evaluation’. Some may have a very definite opinion about it and how it should be carried out while others may not have any conception. Different stakeholders may also have different opinions about the relevance of a particular piece of information for answering an evaluation question. Or they may have different interests. To make evaluation meaningful to the majority of stakeholders, it is important that their perspectives and understandings of evaluation be understood and that a common perspective on the evaluation be arrived at during the planning stage.
Step 4	**Resolving conflicts of interest.** As an evaluator, if you find that stakeholders have strong opinions and there is a conflict of interest among them with respect to any aspect of the evaluation, it is extremely important to resolve it. However, you have to be very careful in resolving differences and must not give the impression that you are favouring any particular subgroup.
Step 5	**Identifying the information stakeholders need from the proposed evaluation.** Identify, from each group of stakeholders, the information they think is important to meet their needs and the objectives of the evaluation.
Step 6	**Forming a steering committee.** For routine consultation, the sharing of ideas and day-to-day decision making, it is important that you ask the stakeholders to elect a steering committee with whom you, as the evaluator, can consult and interact. In addition to providing you with a forum for consultation and guidance, such a committee gives stakeholders a continuous sense of involvement in the evaluation.

Ethics in evaluation

Being ethical is the core requirement of an evaluation. If for some reason you cannot be ethical, do not undertake the evaluation, as you will end up doing harm to others, and that is unethical. Although, as a good evaluator, you may have involved all the stakeholders in the planning and conduct of the evaluation, it is possible that sometimes, when findings are not in someone’s interest, a stakeholder will challenge you. It is of the utmost importance that you stand firm on the findings and do not surrender to any pressure from anyone. Surrendering to such pressure is unethical.

Summary

In this chapter some of the aspects of evaluation research are discussed, in brief, in order to make you aware of them, rather than to provide you with a detailed knowledge base. It is highly recommended that you read some books on evaluation research. This chapter highlights the relationship between research methodology per se and its application to evaluation in practice. Evaluation skills are built on the knowledge and skills of research methodology: an evaluator has to be a good researcher.

In this chapter we looked at some of the definitions of ‘evaluation’, identified its characteristics and examined the reasons for undertaking an evaluation. The intervention–development–evaluation process is discussed in detail, exploring the relationship between programme development and its evaluation. Evaluation studies are classified from two perspectives: the *focus of evaluation* and the *philosophical basis* that underpins them. The typology of evaluation studies is developed from these perspectives. There are four different types of evaluation from the perspective of their focus: *programme/intervention planning evaluation, process/monitoring evaluation, impact/outcome evaluation* and *cost–benefit/cost-effectiveness evaluation*. From the perspective of the philosophies that underpin these evaluations, again, four types of evaluation are identified: *goal-centred/objective evaluation, consumer-oriented/client-centred evaluation*, *improvement-oriented evaluation* and *holistic evaluation*. The evaluation process was outlined step by step with considerable discussion centred on how to convert concepts into indicators into variables, enabling the formulation of questions for respondents that will elicit the required information. How to involve stakeholders in an evaluation process was also discussed using a step-by-step guide. Finally, the readers are alerted to some of the ethical issues in evaluation.

For You to Think About

- Refamiliarise yourself with the keywords listed at the beginning of this chapter and if you are uncertain about the meaning or application of any of them revisit these in the chapter before moving on.
- Imagine that you have been asked to evaluate a service offered by the organisation you work for. Consider how you would go about this process taking into account any ethical dilemmas that may arise and the practical problems that you may face.
- Taking an example of an evaluation study from your own area of interest or profession, identify the stakeholders and consider why it is important to involve them in the process.
- Why, as a service provider, is it important that you evaluate your own practice?