

**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**

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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.

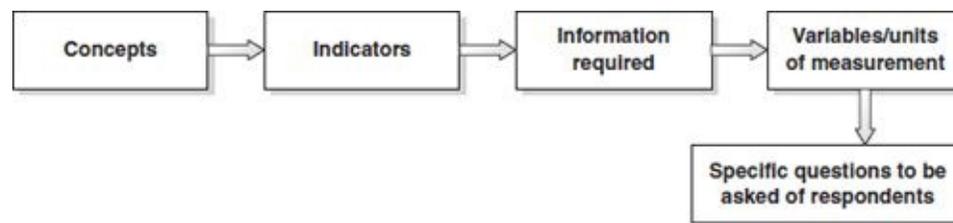


FIGURE 18.8 *Converting concepts into indicators into variables*

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.

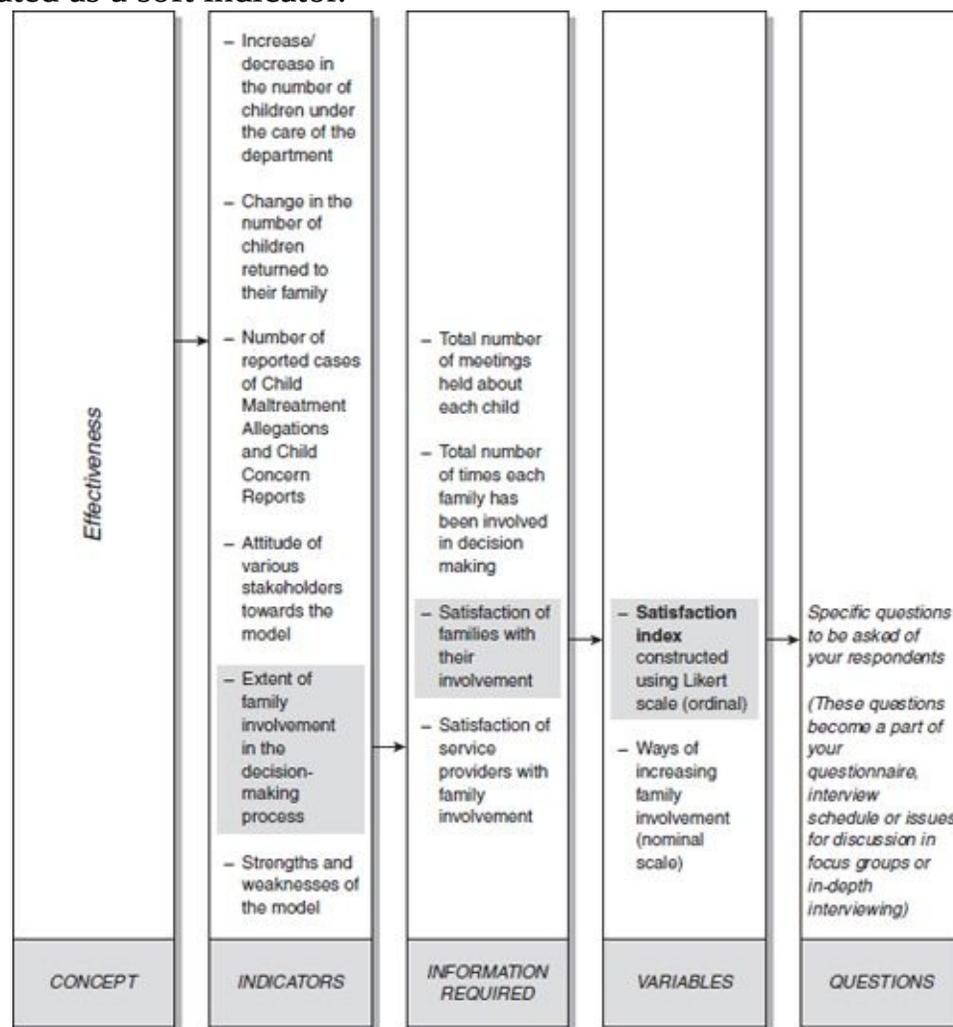


FIGURE 18.9 An example of converting concepts into questions

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**

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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.

**Identifying stakeholders.** First of all, talk with managers, planners, programme administrators, service providers and the consumers of the programme either individually or collectively, and Step 1 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.

**Involving stakeholders.** In order to develop a common perspective with respect to various aspects of the evaluation, it is important Step 2 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.

**Developing a common perspective among stakeholders towards the evaluation.** Different stakeholders may have different Step 3 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.

**Resolving conflicts of interest.** As an evaluator, if you find that stakeholders have strong opinions and there is a conflict of interest Step 4 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.

**Identifying the information stakeholders need from the proposed evaluation.** Identify, from each group of stakeholders, the Step 5 information they think is important to meet their needs and the objectives of the evaluation.

**Forming a steering committee.** For routine consultation, the sharing of ideas and day-to-day decision making, it is important that Step 6 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**

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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?