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ABSTRACT

Papers in this collection address issues related to participatory approaches to assessing impact. The first section, "What Is an Impact Study and How Should We Do It?" contains: (1) "Participatory Impact Assessment" (John Shotton); (2) "Participatory Action Research as an Approach to Impact Assessment" (Victoria McKay); (3) "Participatory Approaches to Impact Studies" (Sasidhara Rao); and (4) "Evaluation vs. Impact Studies" (N. V. Varghese). The second section, "The Role of Baseline Studies in Impact Assessment," contains: (5) "School Focused Baseline Assessments as a Catalyst for Change" (Carol Moloney); (6) "A General Framework for Evaluating Educational Programmes" (Samir Guha Roy); and (7) "Issues To Consider When Planning a Baseline Study" (Tony Luxon). Section 3, "Stakeholder Perspectives," contains: (8) "Identifying Stakeholders" (Dermot F. Murphy and Pauline Rea-Dickins); (9) "Considering the Audience an Important Phase in Project Evaluations" (Dermot F. Murphy and Clara Ines Rubiano); and (10) "Impact Studies and Their Audiences" (Coco Brenes and Tony Luxon). Section 4, "Relationship between National and External Researchers," contains: (11) "A Note on a Participatory Impact Study in Eritrea: Exploring the Relations between National and External Researchers" (Tefsai Bariaghaber); (12) "The Relationship between National Researchers and External Researchers" (Harvey Smith with Paul Bernell); (13) "Impact Studies: The Role of an Insider/Outsider" (Mohammed Melouk); and (14) "Impact Assessment in Educational Projects: Some Perspectives on the 'Insider-Outsider' Debate" (Dave Allan). Section 5, "Training Teachers as Researchers," contains: (15) "Helping Teachers To Develop Competence Criteria for Evaluating Their Professional Development" (Alan Peacock); and (16) "Combining the Teaching of Research Methods with an Assessment of Project Impact" (Elijah Sekgobela). Section 6, "Topicality vs. Sustainability," contains: (17) "A Consideration of Project Assessment: Topicality vs. Sustainability" (Jeff Samuelson and Sarah Harrity); and (18) "Topicality vs. Sustainability in the Evaluation of the South African Book Aid Project" (Cleaver Ota). Section 7, "Impact Assessment and Sustainability," considers; (19) "Background to the MAPP Evaluation" (Carew Treffgarne); (20) "Sustaining Impact: The Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Project" (Keith Morrow); (21) "Assessing the Impact of Sector Wide, Institutional and Policy Outcomes" (Kora Basich); and (22)

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EDUCATION RESEARCH

EVALUATING IMPACT

Edited by

Veronica McKay and Carew Treffgarne

Serial No. 35

Department For International Development

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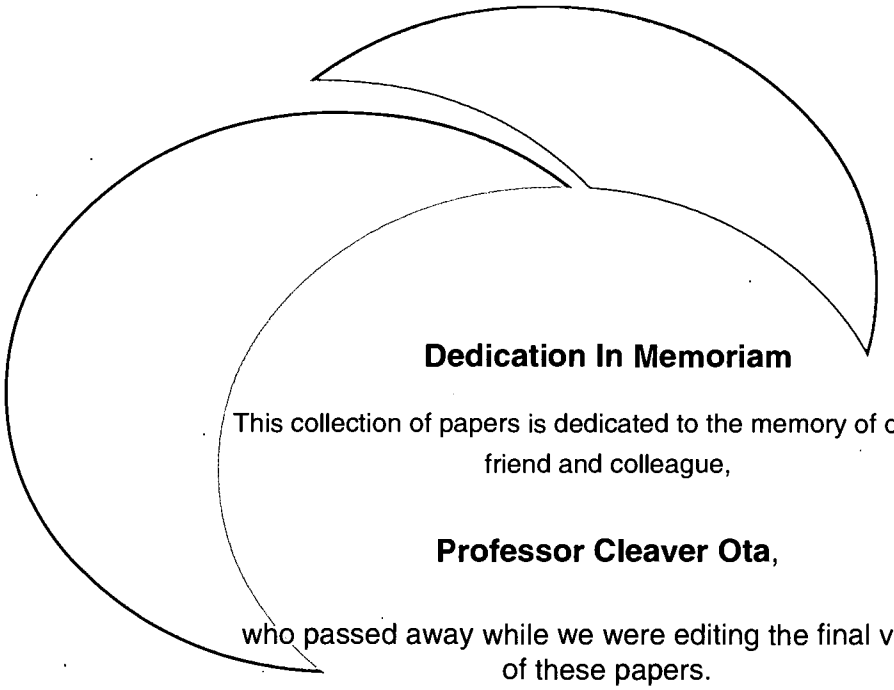

Dedication In Memoriam

This collection of papers is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend and colleague,

Professor Cleaver Ota,

who passed away while we were editing the final version of these papers.
Professor Cleaver was Director of the Education Policy Unit at the University of Fort Hare at the time of his passing.

E R R A T A

Page 11, 8 lines from the bottom: "of the english teacher training " should read "of English teacher training"

Page 42, line 7 from the bottom: should read "who live in the village"

Page 43, the second bulleted item: "monthly minutes and books" should read "monthly minutes and other relevant documents"

Page 49, line 13 of the second block: should read "on structures or the existing systems"

Page 63, the caption to illustration 10: the word "INTYERVIEWED" should read "INTERVIEWED"

Page 105, line 20: should read "the project had effected various changes"

Page 152, third left-hand box: should read "Resources: Year 1"

Page 157, line 4: should read "adult basic education"

Page 159, line 14: should read "wrote up the findings"

Page 166: the second heading should read "2 Considering the distinction between impact and outputs"

Page 194: The third heading should read "3 The approach which we used in our research on impact"

Page 204, the last line: should read "Carew Treffgarne"

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
APC	Additional Project Co-ordinator
APDPEP	Andhra Pradesh District Primary Education Programme
APSO	Australian Personnel Services Overseas
ASCUN	Colombian Association of Universities
BAI	Book Aid International
BC	British Council
CfBT	Centre for British Teachers
COFE	Colombian Framework for English Project
COTE	Certificate for Overseas teachers of English
DERC	District Education Resource Centre
DFID	Department for International Development
DIET	District Evaluation Teams
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
EFA	Education for All
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESTEEM	Effective Schools through Enhanced Educational Management
EU	European Union
FIFO	Fly-in-fly-out
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IELE	Institute for English Language Education
INSET	In-service Teacher Training
ITEC	Institute for Education for Capacity-building
KNLS	Kenya National Library Service
LACAD	Latin America, Caribbean and Atlantic Department
LANGCEN	Language Centres
LCD	Link Community Development
LSEP	Limpopo School Empowerment Project
MAPP	Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Programme
MAPS	Mexican Advanced Professional Scheme
MED	Ministry of Education

MELLD	Molteno Primary Education Literacy and Language Development
MEO	Mandal Education Officer
MGDO	Mandal Child Development Officer
MILE	Management of Innovation in Language Education
MIS	Management Information System
MLO	Mandal Literacy Organiser
MOE	Ministry of Education
MPSI	Mpumalanga Primary Schools Initiative
MRC	Mandal Resource Centre
MRP	Mandal Resource Person
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NILE	Norwich Institute for Language Education
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
ODA	Overseas Development Administration
OSB	Overseas Service Bureau
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PLIS	Provincial Libraries and Information Service
PRESET	Pre-service Teacher Training
PROSPER	Project for Special Purpose English in Romania
READ	Read Education Trust
SABAP	South African Book Aid Project
SCERT	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SEC	School Education Committee
SEP	The Mexican Ministry of Education
SEP	Science Education Project
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
TASO	The Aids Support Organisation
TC	Teachers' Centre
TCO	Technical Co-operation Officer
UCA	University of Central America
UKRITT	Ukraine Initial Teacher Training Project
UNAN	Autonomous National University of Nicaragua
UNISA	University of South Africa
VEC	Village Education Committee
WHO	World Health Organisation
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Introduction

This collection of conference proceedings is based on papers which were presented at the Forum on Impact Studies organised by the Education Division of the Department of International Development between 24 and 25 September 1998. The forum brought together participants from a wide range of projects in India, South Africa, Morocco, Eritrea, Columbia, Mexico and Romania, as well as a number of specialists with experience in participatory approaches to project evaluation. Participants brought to the conference a profound theoretical understanding of participatory approaches to assessing impact – as well as the richness of their personal experience gained from many years of practice. DFID also welcomed representatives from the British Council, CfBT, Link Africa and Book Aid International, who provided a useful stakeholder dimension from a management and/or professional standpoint. The majority of the participants had been associated with Project Impact Assessment, which had been supported by DFID during the 1990s.

The Forum used the following definition of impact, taken from DFID's Glossary of Aid Terms (1998), as its point of departure:

> Impacts (also referred to as effects) may be planned or unplanned; positive or negative; achieved immediately or only after some time; and sustainable or unsustainable. ... Impacts may be observable/ measurable during implementation, at project completion, or only some time after the project has ended. Different impacts may be experienced by different stakeholders.

This definition set the theme for the conference and provided useful guidelines for focussing dialogue about impact assessment.

The original programme was slightly modified after a planning meeting which some participants attended in March. Although there was broad consensus at the Forum about the advantages of following a participatory approach for assessing project or programme impact, it was also apparent that some of the defining characteristics of this kind of evaluation strategy raised questions that needed to be explored and answered by the main stakeholders in the exercise from the very outset. The following extracts highlight the issues that emerged most prominently, and focus on those factors which the Education Division needs to take into account when applying participatory approaches to the future evaluation of the impact of education projects or programmes.

Although participatory approaches to impact assessment were becoming increasingly common during the late 1980s, John Shotton pointed out in his keynote paper that the **World Education for All Conference** at Jomtien in 1990 marked a watershed in terms of local ownership and control in basic education programmes and that it included a substantial critique of donor- and lender-directed approaches to evaluation. The subsequent decisive shift towards wider stakeholder involvement, not only in project implementation, but also in project design, monitoring and evaluation, substantially altered the imbalance implicit in the *donor/beneficiary* or *donor/recipient* relationship. The implicit context of the DFID Forum was therefore the learning process which has impacted on all funding agencies in the nineties – an era described by Kenneth King (1991) as "the Post Jomtien curriculum" – and many contributors referred in one way or another to this transformation of the discourse.

The following themes were used to systematise the papers collected in this volume:

- What is an impact study and how should we do it?
- The role of base line studies in impact assessment
- The relationship between national and external researchers
- Training teachers as researchers
- Topicality vs. sustainability
- Impact assessment and sustainability
- Anticipated and unanticipated project benefits

The papers in this collection address these issues. The collection is divided into thematic sections, and each section deals with a particular theme. The papers, as one might expect, vary in style according to the perspective, concerns and experience of each author. The variety thus reflected emanates from a rich diversity of experience and knowledge. While some participants spoke about projects and programmes from the *insider's* point of view, others were able to complement these contributions with the point of view and concerns of those who engage projects and programmes as *outsiders*. Where possible, we have tried to cluster papers which deal with the same projects or similar issues. While the collection touches most of the current issues that may arise in the conduct of impact studies, it does not pretend to offer a blueprint or recipe for undertaking impact assessment. It's purpose is rather to contribute to the development of a participatory framework for impact assessment through an exploration of current problems, solutions and suggestions for future policy and practice.

While the final chapter attempts to draw together the conclusions drawn by the Education Division from the Forum debate, it should not be understood as (necessarily) reflecting the views of DFID as a whole.

SECTION 1:

What is an impact study and how should we do it?

1.1 The collection opens with a paper entitled *Participatory impact assessment* by **John Shotton**. His paper sets the scene by answering the question *What is an impact study?* He then elucidates what is meant by a participatory study and in so doing, he contrasts traditional approaches to the assessment of impact by way of participatory approaches – approaches that have *come of age* in the nineties. Shotton's paper describes the changes in the theory and practice that are evidenced in the field of project impact assessment since the Jomtien Conference – a period which he terms "the post-Jomtien era". Shotton refers to some of the most far-reaching methodological innovations of the decade, such as the implementation of the ideals of local ownership and the development of local capacity through enabling participants to *learn on the job*. These changes necessitate a shift towards participatory methods, a shift which has radical *epistemological* implications for the assessment of projects.

1.2 **Veronica McKay's** paper elaborates on the epistemology underlying participatory approaches. She argues that participatory approaches have an educative function which cannot be replicated by traditional approaches to impact assessment. When located within an action research framework, she adds, participatory approaches offer substantial benefits to all evaluators and impact crucially on the development of local capacity. (She points out that participatory approaches are contingent on the discursive nature of knowledge – an assumption that underlies collaborative enquiry). McKay's paper, however, also draws attention to difficulties that participatory researchers may encounter when attempting participatory research in disadvantaged communities. She mentions – in particular – difficulties associated with enabling and motivating grassroot participation.

1.3 **Sasidhara Rao** too stresses the importance of the evaluation process being informed by a participatory philosophy. He refers to the way in which the **Andhra Pradesh District Primary Education Programme** was evaluated and argues that that methods and the instruments that were used for this assessment contributed in different ways to engaging participation at different levels and at different stages of the research enterprise. He indicates that participatory approaches encourage participants to reflect on their own contexts – and that this informs practice. Participatory approaches, used in this way, also mediate a formative function. He indicates moreover that the nature of participatory assessments helps to ensure that data – even quantitative data – are interpreted in context.

1.4 **N V Varghese** considers the distinction between an impact study and an evaluation. He outlines four main features which differentiate evaluations from impact studies. The distinction, he argues, has implications for *who* conducts the assessment and *whose* interests are most likely to be served. He indicates that while communities have more interest in the assessment of impact, the interests of funders lie in the evaluation of projects. These observations resonate with the critique of the donor-lead forms of assessment presented by Shotton in the first paper. Varghese makes a strong case for the use of participatory approaches by referring to the *human condition*. He argues that human volition compels researchers to use approaches that account for human experience and that participatory approaches, by their nature, take this into account.

While the Forum agreed broadly about the *virtues* of participatory research, it was nevertheless apparent that this form of evaluation is more complex than it might appear at face value. The subsequent sections in this collection explore these complexities.

SECTION 2:

The role of baseline studies in the assessment of impact

2.1 This section opens with **Carol Moloney's** paper entitled School-focused baseline assessments as a catalyst for change. Moloney too draws on the participatory paradigm and argues that when applied to baseline assessments, the investigation fulfils an important developmental function for teachers. She refers in her paper to her experience in training South African teachers to do baseline studies and she argues that this exercise achieved benefits which go beyond the mere acquisition of data. Indeed, she indicates, teachers acquired a modus operandi for doing collaborative baseline studies while simultaneously coming to grips with many of the new demands that are being made on teachers.

2.2 **Samir Guha Roy's** paper offers a *general framework for evaluating educational programmes*. He indicates that although participatory approaches to assessment have gained ground over the past few years, he believes that there is still a need for *scientific* approaches to assessing impact. He argues that scientific approaches may be usefully employed in assessing those issues of *impact* which are difficult to assess since they may result from factors that are extraneous to programme activities. While firm baseline data and regular post-baseline checks could offer a way of overcoming this problem, Roy argues that, in the domain of impact assessment, there is a growing interest in *scientific assessment* as a way of statistically accounting for such changes.

2.3 **Tony Luxon's** paper is the final paper in this section. Luxon's paper, entitled *Issues to consider when planning a baseline study*, like Moloney's, deals with the importance of the baseline investigation as a way of ensuring adequate benchmarking. Luxon refers to the evolution of the philosophy informing the methodology used for baseline studies for projects in all types of social and educational contexts. It was this paradigm shift, coupled with his own experiences in the field of impact assessment, that prompted him to compile what he considers to be the *twelve essential issues* that need to be considered each time a baseline activity is contemplated. These twelve points (which affect all baseline studies) give rise to suggestions about the design of the research approach, the selection of members for the project implementation team and the dissemination of the findings of the baseline study to various *stakeholders*.

The concern with the *stakeholder* is one that all contributors to the collection emphasised. The next section is devoted entirely to exploring issues related to stakeholder perspectives.

SECTION 3:

Stakeholder perspectives

Who are stakeholders? What are their roles? How do we deal with multiple stakeholders with divergent interests? These are the kinds of questions that this section on stakeholder perspectives attempts to address.

3.1 This section starts with **Dermot Murphy** and **Pauline Rea-Dickins's** consideration of *stakeholder perspectives*. In this paper, they emphasise how important it is for evaluators to identify stakeholder groupings if they want to make effective use of participatory evaluations in educational development projects. They suggest that most definitions overlook dimensions of power and power differentials, and, as such, are inadequate. This claim underlies their view that what is needed is a framework which is more *robust* – a framework that takes issues of power into consideration. Murphy and Rea-Dickins present an outline of such a framework – for which they find support in their research – and they present an elucidation of the implications their findings might have for the practice of participatory research. In their discussion of stakeholders, they inevitably mention the role of the *external* consultant. In this regard, they coin a term *FIFO consultants* to refer to those consultants who rapidly *fly-in/fly-out*. They argue, in line with the emphasis that they place on participation, that a more sustained consultancy role needs to be factored into project designs. Their view of the role of the *FIFO* consultant has repercussions for *insider-outsider* involvement in participatory studies – an issue which is dealt with in detail in the fourth section of this collection.

3.2 **Clara Inés Rubiano** and **Dermot Murphy** in their paper entitled *Considering the audience – an important phase in project evaluations*, emphasise how important it is for evaluators to give consideration to those audiences for whom the evaluation is intended. They interrogate complexities associated with notions of *audience,* and refer to the differing interests, differing statuses as well as the differing power relations that are inherent to the concept of *audience.* They argue that the identification of, and consideration for, the audience/s is central to notions of the practical utility of the recommendations of an evaluation and to the compilation of evaluation reports. The authors draw on critical incidences pertaining to the audience/s, which manifest in the evaluation of the **Colombian Framework for English Project**.

3.3 In this paper **Coco Brenes** and **Tony Luxon** consider the variety of audiences that are implied by multi-partnered projects and the implications of the varied audiences for the dissemination of the project report, and for the mode of reporting. The paper considers the complexities implied by the reporting process, and in particular addresses issues such as: *Who writes the a report? Who reads it? In what language is it produced?* and *How is it disseminated?* Each of these questions is addressed against the backdrop of the ODA **ELT Project** in Nicaragua.

SECTION 4:

The relationships between national and external researchers

4.1 **Tesfai Bariaghaber's** *Note on a participatory impact study,* which is the result of his personal involvement in Eritrea, explores the relations between national and external researchers. He begins his paper by stating that the assessment study was characterised by both *highs* and *lows*. Hence, while his paper acknowledges the many advantages of participatory impact assessment, he nevertheless refers also to some of the *lows*. The *lows* as described by him might be likened to the effects of *FIFO* (defined earlier in paper 3.1). For him, the *lows* are primarily a result of the geographic divide between the local and external evaluation team. He contends that in the case of the Eritrean assessment, the external evaluators moved out of the project too soon to allow them to make a meaningful contribution to the development of local capacity. Their early departure had ramifications for their stake in the ownership of the assessment project. The departure of the external consultants prevented the local team from being able to contribute further ideas or recommendations to the research report. He nevertheless concludes by indicating that collaborative research is beneficial to both internal and external researchers.

4.2

Harvey Smith and **Paul Bennell** also, as their paper title indicates, draw out the complexities associated with the *Relationships between national researchers and external researchers*. Their paper is based on their personal experience of impact studies in which they were engaged in Angola and Eritrea. As with paper 4.1, this paper describes a series of conceptual and practical project issues that impact on the relationship between internal and external researchers – in particular those that give rise to *ownership-type* problems. They argue that there is a need to achieve the "correct balance between local and external ownership". They believe that this correct balance can only be achieved by a research design that ensures that the study meets local needs, and that the external funding agencies are empowered to rate a project's achievements. In their conclusion they ponder the kinds of compromise that might be possible.

4.3

Mohammed Melouk, in his paper entitled *The role of an insider/ outsider in impact assessments*, also explores complexities pertaining to the relationship between internal and external researchers. He bases his discussion on his experience of the **Moroccan ELT project**, and refers to some of the many complexities implied by the researcher's roles. He argues against the imposition of investigations or project designs without these being grounded in a solid local perspective. In highlighting the need for insiders to participate in the assessment of impact, he coins the phrase *insider/outsider,* which refers to those locals who are *outsiders* to the project – but who are *insiders* to its *situational context*. He outlines several good reasons why *insiders/outsiders* should be included in impact assessment teams – not only because they are communication facilitators but also because of their ability to mediate data and thereby contribute to insightful and contextually appropriate conclusions. In this sense he echoes Rao's sentiments in paper 1.3.

4.4

Dave Allan's paper is the final paper in this section. His paper, entitled *Impact assessment in educational projects: some perspectives on the 'insider-outsider' debate*, also stresses the importance of a consideration of the roles of *insiders-outsiders* in project assessment. These roles, he argues, have implications for *who* does the evaluating and *who* decides whether the outcomes are judged as either successful or not. In order to situate his own position in this debate, he draws on four case studies of evaluations undertaken in Bangladesh, Estonia and Morocco. These evaluations reflect a variety of permutations on a continuum from, on the one hand, being a single outsider researcher to, on the other hand, working as an insider with a range of insider-stakeholders. Allan makes various recommendations for good practice on the basis of his observations and critique.

SECTION 5:

Training teachers as researchers

In this section, both Peacock's and Sekgobela's papers focus on training teachers to do assessments. They claim a wide range of benefits as a result of this training. Earlier papers also made some reference to teachers doing research: the papers of Moloney and McKay, for example, draw attention to the many benefits of this form of training.

5.1 **Alan Peacock**, in his paper entitled *Helping teachers to develop competence criteria for evaluating their professional development*, discusses interventions in South Africa and Sri Lanka which were intended to help teachers to develop competence criteria for evaluating their professional development. He elucidates various stages of the process which enabled teachers to evaluate their own performance by developing criteria for assessing competence in teaching. Teachers may apply the criteria, which they have generated, as part of a collective enterprise in their classroom situations. He argues that the reflection and thinking underlying this approach enabled teachers to become aware of the need to establish levels of achievement in any given skill area. In practice this meant that teachers are given the responsibility to develop their *own* competence. This obviously has a number of positive spin-offs for their teaching practice.

5.2 **Elijah Sekgobela** also trains teachers to do research. In his paper, entitled *Combining the teaching of research methods with the assessment of project impact*, Sekgobela describes how, while using the University of South Africa's (Unisa) training course for adult educators to teach research skills which are needed by students for the fulfilment of curriculum requirements for trainee educators, he simultaneously uses his teaching opportunities to conduct impact assessment. In this paper, he describes the process which required students to participate in all spheres of the research process – from the initial conceptualisation of the research to the final stage of recording of data. This paper discusses the process and benefits derived from teachers' undertaking an evaluation of their own contexts.

SECTION 6:

Topicality vs. sustainability

6.1 **Jeff Samuelson** and **Sara Harrity** consider the debate which has arisen from attempts to answer the questions *What outcomes are we looking for in terms of impact and what are the implications for the approach that we may adopt?* In answering these questions they draw on two projects with which Book Aid International is associated. These projects, they argue, focus more on *outputs* than on issues of sustainability. They argue that, by their very nature, these outputs

may be described as addressing questions of *topicality* rather than *sustainability*. The necessity for maintaining an accurate focus is made more complex by the requirement that evaluators determine the extent to which a particular project's intervention (as opposed to any number of external influences) has brought about whatever changes may have been observed. If the assessment is to determine what impact has been a direct result of the intervention and what impact should be attributed to extraneous factors, it must consider a number of other features such as, for example, the political, social and economic context in which the project has been operating.

6.2 **Cleaver Ota's** paper echoes the concern expressed by Samuelson and Harrity - that it is essential to address features of the *context* in our endeavours to attain a *prognosis* for project sustainability. His paper outlines the approach employed in the determining the outcomes of the South African Book Aid Project (SABAP) and certain concerns pertaining to project sustainability. While he concludes that the project had achieved the outcomes defined in the project document, he points to extraneous factors which impinge on these achievements. Accordingly, he asserts that it is not possible to assess impact, or to speculate on sustainability without locating the project within its socio-economic and political context. To do so, would be tantamount to decontextualising the possibilities for delivery. This, he argues, is because there are a number of extraneous factors which impinge on the actual implementation and which have a bearing on the potential for sustaining the project. With regard to the SABAP project, he identifies two such features: namely the role of government in financing the *post-donor* phase of the project, and the complex relations implied by collaborative multi-partnered implementation.

SECTION 7:

Impact assessment and sustainability

This section focuses on the relationship between the assessment of impact and project sustainability. The papers take as their point of departure, the way in which the form of assessment could contribute to the enhancement of project goals, and to the capacitation of local players. These discussions are juxtaposed with the approach employed to assess the impact made by Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Project.

7.1 This section opens with the speech delivered by **Carew Treffgarne** on behalf of the Latin America, Caribbean and Atlantic Department (LACAD), DFID at various regional conferences on the impact of the professionalisation of the english teacher training in Mexico. Her talk outlines the rationale underlying the design of the model for assessment, and as such, provides an informative backdrop for the subsequent papers in this section. Her paper is intended to situate the collection of papers in this section – all of which are based on the evaluation of the **Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Programme**. Treffgarne indicates that the decision to use a participatory approach to evaluating project impact, was based on the understanding that it was not possible to do justice to a

programme (of the scope and scale of MAPP) by utilising traditional approaches to evaluation. Her talk outlines some of the benefits of participatory assessment – in particular with regard to furthering the achievement of project outcomes, and to enhancing possibilities of sustaining project benefits. Her paper suggests that the approach employed, would be of direct benefit to participating universities, and more broadly, to the sector. Her paper provides an informative backdrop for the subsequent discussions of Morrow, Basich and Rodriguez.

7.2 Following Treffgarne, **Keith Morrow's** paper is concerned with the extent to which projects are able to sustain their impact after the project is concluded. His paper focuses on the assessment of impact on participants in the **Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Project**, a project intended to upgrade the professional qualifications of teachers working in language departments. Morrow describes the approach used to gain a sense of the impact made on teachers – an approach to the assessment of impact which doubled up, in formative fashion, as a component in building of institutional capacity. In this sense, Morrow views participatory research approaches as being essential for sustainability because they provide participants in particular with an opportunity to undertake a qualitative and quantitative assessment of impact. He suggests that this is one way to enhance the professionalism of those involved. He also indicates that the process of evaluation, constructed along similar lines, could contribute to the aims of the project – while at the same time contributing to sustainability.

7.3 **Kora BasichPeralta's** paper also elucidates aspects of the Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Project's assessment of impact. She outlines the research approach employed by her university in assessing impact. She mentions that once the assessment had begun, the research team was amazed to discover the achievement of outcomes which were not initially anticipated. In particular, she refers to the achievement of sector-wide, as well as institutional and policy outcomes. Basich, like Morrow (see the previous paper) indicates that the process of evaluation – especially the reflective component – achieved more than just the necessary required data. It also, she indicates, contributed to the enhancement of project goals in terms of qualitative improvement of English teacher training.

7.4 In this paper, **Jorge Anguilar Rodriguez** describes the method of assessment used in the **Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Scheme (MAPS)**. He indicates that although the research design utilised in this project was similar to standard research designs used elsewhere, the emphasis in this kind of assessment is different. The emphasis in the research design was directed at uncovering *inter alia* the unanticipated outcomes – and these, once discerned, played a significant role in ensuring project sustainability through their being posed as benchmarks for the continuation of the MAPS programme and for new projects which might be started.

SECTION 8:

Anticipated and unanticipated project benefits

8.1 **Mfanwenkosi Malaza,** like Samuelson and Harrity, also suggests that if the assessment is to determine what impact has been a direct result of the intervention and what impact should be attributed to extraneous factors, it must consider a number of other features such as, for example, the political, social and economic context in which the project has been operating. He also examines the anticipated and unanticipated benefits of a project. His paper focuses on the *types* of impact made by the **Mpumalanga Primary Schools Initiative**. He argues that the determination of a project's benefits is more complex than it may appear to be at face value and that it is necessary to distinguish between *anticipated* and *unanticipated* outcomes. He argues that every project has degrees of both *intended* and *unintended* outcomes – whether they are positive or not – and that the impact of the unintended outcomes very often outweighs the intended ones from the local people's point of view. He elaborates on the *unanticipated* outcomes, which were not predicted at the start of the intervention but which nevertheless make a significant impact. He argues that these need also to be considered when evaluating project impact. He, like Samuelson and Harrity, contends that when identifying unanticipated benefits, it is necessary to look at the wider context of a project's operational environment. This becomes vital if one wishes to guard against attributing effects to the project that are merely incidental to it.

8.2 **Mirela Bardi** and **Roy Cross** also give consideration to the question of project outcomes. Their paper deals with an assessment of the impact of the **Project for Special Purpose English in Romania (PROSPER)**. The paper describes how, apart from measuring the impact of the project, the evaluation specifically takes into account the sectoral impacts that led to the *ripple* effects of the project. These ripple effects mean that the project affects not only the sector, but also those institutions which were not participating in **PROSPER**. Bardi and Cross point out that it is necessary to consider the consequences of such *ripple* effects on the sector.

8.3 In her paper, **Roopa Joshi** attempts to provide a review of a critical area of project management in the **District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)**, namely that of the assumptions underlying the *practices* and *strategies* for the assessment of project impact. She illuminates three broad issues, which she argues, informed the approach:

Firstly, it was necessary to address the question of *how* the **DPEP** impact assessment model should be designed. The *how*, she suggests, refers to the design on both a conceptual and operational level.

Secondly, it was necessary to consider the content and range of existing **DPEP** practice as it manifested across the various states and at various levels of decision-making. In terms of this, it was pertinent to establish *how* this practice might influence the various stakeholders of the project.

And thirdly, it was necessary to consider *what* the possible *way forward* might be for **DPEP** in the arena of assessment research.

8.4 Finally, **Carew Treffgarne** presents reflections on the contributions which emanated from the **Forum on Impact Studies**. In this paper she offers her concluding comments. Her reflections include an acknowledgement of the value of a participatory approach to impact assessment as well as the complexities associated with the process – particularly with regard to local ownership, insider/outsiders and, of course, the FIFO factor. Her paper draws attention to what DFID ought to take into account as it attempts to resolve the problems and confront the issues that evaluators have delineated in their papers. She analyses the papers in this collection in terms of the same thematic categories which have been used to organise this volume.

Treffgarne recommends that DFID's Education Division pay serious attention to the recommendations about the importance of allocating adequate time for assessments, budgetary considerations, and of the actual timing of such assessments. Considerations such as these need to be factored into project documents and project budgets. Her paper makes fundamentally important statements about the assessments of baseline studies and project impact – as well as about the sustainability of projects. Carew Treffgarne concludes by indicating that the **Forum on Impact Studies** has been instrumental in helping Education Advisers in DFID to identify some of the important lessons learned from the two-day workshop, issues which might constructively inform the future practice of the Department.

Veronica McKay & Carew Treffgarne

1

WHAT IS AN IMPACT STUDY AND HOW SHOULD WE DO IT?

11 Participatory impact assessment

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In this paper, John Shotton considers the changes in the theory and practice that are evidenced in the field of project impact assessment in the post-Jomtien era. He indicates that subsequent to the Jomtien Conference in 1990, aid programmes were increasingly characterised by a shift away from being funder-driven towards being locally owned and locally driven. This paradigm shift has been possible through, *inter alia*, the development of local capacity. This shift, Shotton indicates, has radical epistemological implications for the assessment of project impact – an issue that this paper interrogates. The author presents a strong case for formative participatory impact assessments, which, he argues, contribute to the building of project capacity and local ownership. Participatory practice enables participants to learn on the job and is more likely to be responsive to local needs than are traditional approaches.

Finally, Shotton demonstrates the shift from traditional forms of assessments to participatory assessments by contrasting the assessment of projects that might be classified as traditional (pre-Jomtien) with those that demonstrate what he considers to be the essential ingredients of participatory practice.

1 Introduction

There are three important contexts to this consideration of the nature and operation of participatory impact assessment:

- The first is what King (1991) has called *The Post-Jomtien Curriculum*. This is the learning agenda for the international donor and lending agencies laid out by Third World Network at the *World Education for All Conference* (1990) at Jomtien. The agenda centres on issues of local ownership and control in basic education aid programmes and includes a substantial critique of donor- and lender-directed approaches to evaluation in the pre-Jomtien era.

- The second is the shift in approach of some of the international donor and lending agencies in some projects to the Post-Jomtien Curriculum.

- The third is a focus on a sample of basic education programme evaluations in an attempt to draw out the essential ingredients of participatory impact assessment. The evaluations considered are by no means all examples of participatory practice. On the contrary, I make comparisons of participatory and more conventional and traditional approaches.

2 What is impact assessment?

Before we consider participatory approaches to impact assessment, it is important to be clear about the nature of impact assessment itself. Impact assessment may be distinguished from other types of evaluation by the area of the programme on which it focuses. This logic follows the evolution of the programme as it unfolds and has been a generally useful paradigm in educational evaluation. Rossi and Freeman (1993), for example, distinguish between three programme phases which strike me as particularly useful:

- Conceptualisation and design
- Monitoring and implementation
- Assessment of effectiveness

Each of these phases is compatible with different evaluation strategies:

21 Conceptualisation and design

At the conceptualisation phase of the programme, a diagnostic evaluation procedure may be appropriate as research questions focus on programme features such as the programme's underlying assumptions, its logic, major stakeholders, the programme's objective, and the context in which implementation is to occur. Adequate understanding of these issues is critical before a programme is designed and started.

2.2 Monitoring and implementation

The second stage, monitoring and implementation, focuses on the programme's operations after the project has started. Here, several types of evaluations may be appropriate for a given objective. These are essentially formative evaluation approaches and are intended to improve the overall operations of the programme. Several different evaluation modes could be included in this group including, *evaluability assessment*, which attempts to answer the basic question of whether a programme can be evaluated. Perhaps best known though in the process of implementation evaluation is what focuses on delivery and assesses the programme's conformity with its basic design. *Performance monitoring* and implementation indication could be included in this group. This type of evaluation periodically reviews the short-term outcomes of the programme, along with its quality, to assess the degree to which the programme's activities affect these outcomes.

2.3 Assessment of effectiveness

It is in the phase immediately after initial implementation that we find impact assessment. Impact assessment gauges the extent to which a programme has led to desired changes in the target field and audience. It implies a set of programme objectives that can be identified and used as a basis for measuring the programme's impact. Thus the overall goal of an impact assessment is to determine if, and the extent to which, a programme has met its objectives. In this phase of the programme, distinguishing *impact* from the programme's *outputs* and *outcomes* is often valuable. Outputs refer to the immediate consequences of the programme whereas outcomes describe the more immediate results. Both outputs and outcomes may be intended or unintended, and need to be assessed for their logical relationship to final programme objectives.

2.4 Formative or summative assessments

It has often been argued (IDRC 1972) that impact assessment can only be summative. However, given the time frame of most basic education aid programmes, it is critical that they are formative. As Phile (1994) argues, impact assessment and evaluation in general must not simply serve the need for the international donor and lending agencies to satisfy their respective governments' treasury departments and banks. On the contrary, the priority should be to serve the needs of primary users and it is here that a participatory paradigm becomes essential. Though Phile recognises the need for the agencies to benefit from evaluation, for him it is only a question of pursuing advocacy on the part of primary users as a priority.

That this is necessary is clear from the principles for the evaluation of development assistance set out by OECD (1992:132):

The main purposes of evaluation are:

- to improve future aid policy, programmes and projects throughfeedback of lessons learned.
- to provide a basis for accountability, including the provision of information to the public.

To this should be added purposes that reflect the conclusions of the Jomtien Conference in relation to evaluation, namely that it should assist the process of capacity building at the local level and local ownership and control in a context of the decentralisation of programme administration.

3 What is participatory impact assessment?

By *participatory impact assessment* I am referring to what has been described as applied social research that involves trained evaluation personnel and practice-based decision makers working in partnership (Cousins & Earle 1992). Usually decision-makers are donor or lending agency personnel and recipient country administrators with programme responsibility, or people with a vital interest in the programme. Participatory impact assessment is best suited to *formative evaluation* exercises that seek to understand innovations with the expressed intention of informing and improving their implementation. As I indicate later, two projects that fit this bill are two of the largest post-Jomtien *Education for All (EFA)* programmes in the world, namely the **District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)** in India and the **Effective Schools Through Enhanced Educational Management (ESTEEM)** programme in Bangladesh - the latter two are substantially funded by the **Department for International Development (DFID).**

In participatory impact assessment, a crucial part of the capacity building deemed necessary for evaluation by the Jomtien Conference is to train key personnel (project administrative staff) in the technical skills crucial to the successful completion of the research exercise. Thereafter, practitioners (resource centre staff, teachers and community members, including those on school committees, parents and possibly children and other learners) can learn *on the job* with mentoring and workshop input where necessary. When this happens, both parties participate crucially in the research process. Such learning is an indispensable part of the participatory model since the intention is that key administrative personnel develop sufficient technical knowledge and research skills to take on the coordinating role in continuing and new projects, and that they need to rely on the initial trainer for consultation about technical issues and tasks such as statistical analysis, instrument modification and technical reporting. Participatory impact assessment is likely to be responsive to local needs, while maintaining enough technical rigour to satisfy probable critics – thereby enhancing use within the local context.

4 How is participatory impact assessment different?

Participatory impact assessment is conceptually distinguishable from other types of named collaborative enquiry and evaluation on two important, although not independent, dimensions: goals and process.

4.1 The goals of participatory impact assessment

In relation to goals, the pre-Jomtien orientations designed by the northern-based academic community advocated the simultaneous improvement of local practice and the generation of valid social theory (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 1993) as in, for example, the so-called state of the art evaluation of the elementary education programme in the Philippines in the 1980s. Similarly more contemporary practitioner-centred instances of collaborative evaluation have expressed as a goal the *empowerment* of individuals or groups, or the rectification of social iniquities. Such a goal is expressed for example by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) evaluation of the teacher training programmes for primary and secondary education in Mozambique and Guinea Bissau in the 1980s and 1990s (Carr-Hill 1997). These interests are beyond the scope of participatory impact assessment since such interests belong firmly to programme goals and programme implementation. I would argue that it is fundamentally dishonest to believe that an evaluation process can achieve such ends. This would constitute only a reflection of tokenistic commitment to a social agenda by non-practitioners more interested in the formulation of grand social theories and rhetoric rather than reality: it would be a tantamount to a 'deodorant' that tries to sanitise the inadequacies of overall programme direction.

The approach that I would advocate is not ideologically bound, nor is it devoted to the generation of social theory. Rather participatory impact assessment has, as its central interest, an intention to enhance the use of evaluation data for practical problem solving within the contemporary organisational context – an endeavour that will support the overall programme goals. Indeed this is the essence of Phile's argument in relation to the post-Jomtien scenario, namely that the driving force for a new agenda relies on overall programme definition and orientation and that we need to make sure that individual programme components accord with that definition and orientation.

4.2 The process of participatory impact assessment

The second differing dimension, process-based, takes shape inside participatory impact assessment by having administrators and key organisational personnel working in partnership with members of the community of practice as opposed to other models, such as the benefit monitoring model that has served the **Nepal Basic Education Programme** and the **Nepal Secondary Education Project** through the 1990s, which exclude the latter. Whereas administrators, for example, do bring a set of technical skills to the evaluation act which are important, practitioners bring a thorough knowledge of context and content and the partnership is critical for effective participatory impact assessment. The former work as coordinators or facilitators of the research project, but fully share control and involvement in all phases of the research process with practitioners. This thrust is distinguishable both from pre-Jomtien forms of evaluation where control of the research process is maintained by the expert evaluator or evaluators (Whyte 1991), and from so-called practitioner-centred approaches where such control lies completely in the hands of the key individuals in the practitioner group (Elliot 1991).

Participatory impact assessment may thus be summarised against what I call the *pre-Jomtien model*, which has often masqueraded as a participatory entity:

- The pre-Jomtien model, the benefit monitoring in Nepal being a classic example, attempts to engage many potentially interested members of recipient-country administrators in order to create support but without yielding any power in the crucial areas of model focus and design. The participatory model, envisaged for **ESTEEM** in Bangladesh, will actively involve primary users at all stages of the impact assessment process, from focus and design through to dissemination of conclusions.

- The pre-Jomtien model involves programme participants in a consultative way to clarify domains and establish the questions for the evaluation project. SIDA's work in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau epitomises this. The participatory model engages the primary users in the 'nuts and bolts' of focusing the assessment, formulating the design, deciding on the methodology and sample, developing the instruments for data collection, collecting the data, analysing and interpreting the data and reporting the results and making recommendations. Possibly the best example of this is the impact assessment mechanism that has been developed in Andhra Pradesh, India, as part of **DPEP**.

- In the pre-Jomtien model, the expert evaluator or evaluators are the principal investigators who translate the institutional requirements into a study and conduct that study, as in the case of the Philippines evaluation already referred to above. In the participatory model, as in the case of **DPEP** Andhra Pradesh, the external consultants help only to coordinate the exercise and are responsible for advising about technical support, training and quality control. Conducting the study is the responsibility of practitioners.

5 Why participatory impact assessment?

The underlying justification for a genuinely participatory approach is problem solving in professional work, which is closely tied to Schon's (1983) terms: *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. Through participatory impact assessment, recipient country administrators and donor and lending agency members may be surprised by what they observe and may therefore be moved to rethink their practice. Unlike so-called emancipatory forms of action research, that use Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) for example, the rationale for participatory impact assessment resides not in its ability to ensure social justice or somehow to level the societal playing field, but in the utilisation of systematically and socially constructed knowledge.

I here express my orientation towards evaluation utilisation which suggests that under certain conditions, evaluation or applied research data will be used either for providing support for discrete decisions in programme constituencies (e.g. decisions about programme expansion) or for educating organisation members about programme operation and the consequences of programme practices. These uses of data are known to be dependent on two main categories of factors:

- *features of the evaluation itself*, including its timeliness, relevance, quality and intelligibility

- f*eatures of the context* in which data are expected to be used, such as programme implementers needs for information, political climate and receptiveness toward systematic enquiry as a mode to understanding (Cousins & Leithwood 1986).

This framework for understanding participatory impact assessment is inadequate in at least two respects.

Firstly, it links the use of data to an undifferentiated individual called the decision-maker. To assume that organisational decisions supported by data are the product of single individuals processing information and translating it into action is, at best, tenuous and probably not representative of decision making in most organisations. Rather, decisions made explicitly, or implicitly, are the product of some form of collective discourse, deliberation or exchange. As such, it is eminently preferable to envision the nature and consequences of participatory impact assessment in the context of organisational groups, units, subunits and the like.

Secondly, the evaluation framework may be described as inadequate since it fails to recognise the powerful influences of various forms of interaction between practice-based and research-based communities. Considerable evidence is accumulating to show the benefits of combining the unique sets of skills, brought to projects and tasks by both researchers and members of the community of practice, regardless of whether or not the tasks are research-based.

Cousins and Earle (1992) have provided a thorough review of a variety of lines of research-based evidence in support of the participatory impact assessment process. Their findings underscore the importance of social interaction and exchange and the need to conceive of organisational processes in collective and social terms. They also support the integration of *research* and *practice* specialisations as a means to stimulating enduring organisational change. An appropriate theoretical framework in which to situate participatory impact assessment, then, will be one that adheres to such principles.

Participatory impact assessment, viewed from this perspective, is a strategy or intervention that will produce adaptive knowledge to the extent that it monitors and provides an opportunity for the interpretation of programme outcomes, and generative knowledge such that interpretations lead to enlightenment or the development of new insights into programme operations, or effects, or especially organisational processes and consequences.

6 Conclusion

Finally, the post-Jomtien changes in the theory and practice of project impact assessment have encouraged the shift to participatory assessment – an interventionist practice that contributes to many dimensions of the project. This is more so when participatory assessments are undertaken as formative activities. The evaluative assessment can then be regarded as a powerful learning system, designed ultimately to foster local applied research, and thereby enhance social discourse about relevant learning centre-based issues. When applied research tasks are carried out by school and district staff, their potential for enhancing organisational learning activity will be strengthened and the sustainability of the project be enhanced.

1.2 Participatory action research as an approach to impact assessment

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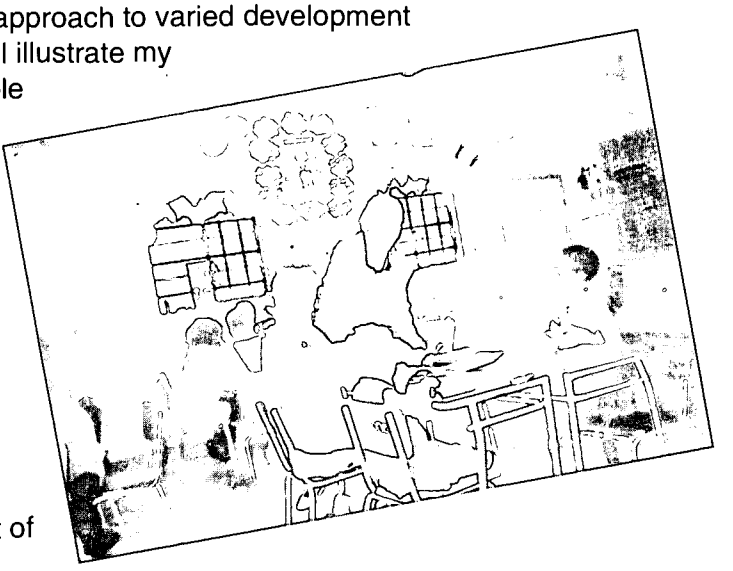
In this paper Veronica McKay corroborates John Shotten's view of the post-Jomtien shift towards a participative process for researching project impact. In elaborating this point of view, she asserts that the participative approach to assessment presupposes an epistemological shift from more realist-orientated research approaches towards a non-realist approach to assessing impact. This view of knowledge, she argues, is diametrically different from the positivist belief in an objective reality and knowledge that are universally true or false – the epistemological presupposition which inspired traditional pre-Jomtien approaches. She argues that a non-realist orientation opens the way for multi-vocal discourses, and that this is a prerequisite for participation.

One of the implications of the non-realist epistemology is teachers (as active participants) are brought into our endeavours to assess project impact. It is only by doing this, she asserts, that we can ensure that the assessment of impact will be both formative and *relevant* and *educational* for teachers at the *chalk face*. In this paper McKay discusses the advantages and problems associated with participatory action research (PAR) in general and then specifically examines how it may be applied to the assessment of impact. She illustrates her points by making reference to the application of PAR to the assessment of impact in the **Molteno Early Literacy and Language Development (MELLD)** project in Namibia.

1 Introduction

This paper is informed (in general) by my experiences of impact assessment of the various school-based projects with which I have been involved in South Africa as well as by the many opportunities I have had as a sociologist1 to apply the PAR approach to varied development contexts. More specifically I shall illustrate my contentions by referring to my role in the Namibian **Molteno Early Literacy and Language Development** project, which is part of a broad programme of ODA/ DFID-financed assistance in the education sector in Namibia.



1.1 Project outputs

The primary goal of the **MELLD** project (as is the case with most of the projects referred to in this publication) is the enhancement of teacher's capacities. The **MELLD** project document (revised in 1995[2]) outlines the various outcomes which the project was expected to achieve, namely, to:

- introduce a learner-centred methodology into literacy and language classrooms in the lower primary grades at pilot schools
- empower the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture with the capacity to provide and manage in-service training and monitoring for literacy and language teachers in primary schools
- establish (both within the Ministry and in the regions) a sustainable research and development cadreship who would be able to produce Namibian mother-tongue and English-language materials for lower primary grades
- increase the number of learners in basic education with appropriate mother-tongue and English oral, reading and writing skills in selected classes in selected areas of Namibia.

In order to achieve these outputs, a series of partnerships were formed with a number of interested groupings. (These are referred to in section 5.1)

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1 I have successfully used PAR several times in school-based and other development projects across a variety of sectors. UNISA's *Institute for Adult Basic Education* has a variety of education/development projects which cross a number of sectors. Our students are taught PAR and are expected apply this in their practical projects. I have personally found the PAR approach to be as effective in gender and water projects as it is in education projects.

2 A mid-term evaluation was conducted in 1994, in which impact and progress levels of the objectives were assessed. A revised project memorandum for phase 2, based on the recommendations of the 1994 evaluation, was compiled.

2 The application of a PAR approach to project assessment

My previous experiences in assessing projects had required me to be involved for longer periods of time, and I had been brought into projects in much earlier stages of implementation. This earlier involvement had enabled me to assume an *ongoing* facilitator/evaluator function. Since the nature of the **MELLD** investigation resonates with other contributions in this publication, I shall here only describe the way in which I endeavoured to apply a PAR approach in the implementation of the **MELLD** project.

I use the word *endeavoured* deliberately since circumstances did not allow us fully to utilise a PAR-approach in this particular case. The main reason for this was that the assessment exercise was undertaken within the constraints of my being a *tacked-on-outsider evaluator* who was *fifoed*[3] in for a brief spell, three years into the implementation of the project. (I was an *insider* in the sense that I had had experience in using and training practitioners to use the Molteno programmes and methods.)

In spite of time and other constraints, we decided to evaluate the **MELLD** project by applying the principles of a PAR approach to the investigation as comprehensively as we could. Although we achieved what we had set out to achieve (the definition of our goals took into account the constraints of the overall situation), the exercise taught us a lot about how to incorporate a PAR component into educational development projects as a formative mode of assessment.

3 Towards a definition of PAR

There are many different definitions and applications of action research. In the educational arena, Kemmis and McTaggart suggest that, for them, action research means 'a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in order to improve ... their own social or educational practices' (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988:5).

These two authors link the concepts of *action* and *research* because researchers acquire knowledge through the *research* process while simultaneously putting their research into practice (the *action* component of 'action research'). They draw attention to the *participatory* nature of such research by indicating that action of this kind is (by definition) collaborative since it takes place in the context of any group with a *shared* concern.

Selener (1997:108), who suggests that collaboration brings teachers and university-based researchers or other facilitators together in the PAR exercise, corroborates this view. He indicates that the joint enterprise entails setting goals, planning the research design, collecting and analysing the results in a collaborative way. He points out that 'although teachers and

3 This is an amusing and instructive concept which was coined by Rea-Dickins and Murphy to refer to consultants who Fly-in-fly-out (fi-fo). Their paper in this publication elaborates on the concept.

researchers may play different roles based on their respective skills, members of both constituencies work as equals'. There are distinct differences between traditional approaches to assessing impact and PAR. In PAR the researcher is much more than an impartial and aloof observer: he or she is also a facilitator. In PAR participants are also thought of as researchers – rather than mere objects of research. The facilitator is an active agent in the inquiry process. He or she facilitates and provides the participants with skills and research know-how but does not give answers (Selener 1997, Udas 1998, McTaggart 1991). Understanding the role of the researcher is central to understanding the practical utility of the PAR approach.

3.1 The practical utility of PAR

While the PAR approach provides researchers (particularly if they are outsiders) with a useful route for getting into the logic of *other people's* projects, it allows them to enable the project simultaneously. PAR is an approach which has been applied in the professional development of teachers and in projects which are designed to improve schools. Classroom teachers, as researchers, have used PAR to improve their own practices. Selener (1997:96) indicates that the main assumption underlying this approach is that the teacher and others working in the field of education become *researchers* and *change agents* in order to improve their situation. The main objective is thus to improve the day-to-day practice of teachers in their classes – one of the significant aims of all the projects referred to in this publication.[4]

When applied to the assessment of impact, the PAR approach benefits project participants in numerous ways – and also substantially improves the prospects for a project's sustainability. Some of the most significant advantages of the PAR approach are that it:

- takes the hierarchy out of the evaluation stage by bringing in project implementers to work with the so-called experts
- enables all participants become co-researchers
- enables all participants to define the criteria used for measuring
- involves the participants in interpreting and authenticating the findings
- engages participants in the cycle of reflection-action-reflection
- enables the (often) poor or marginalised to impact on policy
- enables bureaucracies to become more participatory
- creates a forum in which members can act as critical sounding boards
- acts as a forum for information exchange and as a resource for group/ project players
- permits sharing of knowledge and resources and it promotes development expertise

4 Teachers and other educational practitioners are usually engaged in PAR as active participants. The process usually addresses a *single* case or a *tricky issue*, and, if these issues are reported, their findings may have wider benefits.

4 Participatory action research and the reflective practitioner

The PAR approach is predicated on reflection. The *reflection* is introduced as part of the PAR methodology, it transforms classrooms into learning communities in which teachers become more inquiry-orientated, reflect on what they are doing, and decide on ways and means to achieve/improve on what they are doing or what is happening. In PAR-inspired assessments, practitioners *themselves* engage in the process of developing criteria for evaluating. This enables them to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their *own* practice. This requires them to:

- notice what is happening in the classroom
- think about what is happening both during the lesson and afterwards
- work out ways of improving on what is happening
- test their improvements in practice
- find out how well the improvements might have worked, and then
- think again (i.e. begin the whole cycle again).

The following is suggested as a PAR plan for teachers:

INITIAL REFLECTION	What problem did Ms X have? Whom did she ask to help her with the problem?
ACTION PLAN	What should she try out in order to improve the situation?
OBSERVATION	How did the plan work out? What problems remained unsolved?
REFLECTION	What else could she try to do? How is this new idea an improvement on her first idea?
ACTION PLAN	What plan has she devised to improve her situation?

Romm and McKay (1999:8)

4.1 Reflection as the basis of change

The reflective component provides a scaffold for practice in that it allows project players, project monitors, evaluators and even learners, through reflection, to describe what constitutes *best practice*. This offers opportunities for ongoing *monitoring* and *formative* evaluation and confers

the added benefit of ensuring sustainability. PAR usually involves groups of practitioners who come together at regular intervals to address particular problems or insights they might have encountered in their teaching situation. Practitioners are required to note anything that happens during a particular lesson that may be of interest to the other practitioners in the group.

Practitioners should also record, for example, how they dealt with tricky situations, or how a particular teaching method worked out. This is a form of situational analysis that encourages teachers (1) to think about what happens when they teach and (2) to try out different teaching ideas. This brings together the theory (through reflection) and the practice (or action) of teaching. What I have described above represents one way in which teachers may engage in situational analysis.

It is reflection and understanding – rather than random, spontaneous acts – that create change. The process requires a reflective spiral of planning, action, observation, reflection/replanning, action, and so on. Reflection uncovers successive layers of meaning. Reflection is a means for systematically collecting and analysing data, solving problems, and evaluating and implementing.

Those working in a school setting may be actively involved in all stages of the research and action process. This constitutes a radical departure from traditional education research which was always conducted exclusively by those *outside* the implementation strategy. PAR is unique because practitioners themselves are involved in creating and applying knowledge rather than merely implementing directives and recommendations obtained from traditional 'outsider-drive' research and imposed from above. The special advantages of PAR increase the likelihood that research results will be useful to teachers in their own practice because, in PAR, theories have to validated in practice.

Young (1983) recognises that the formulation of a curriculum, or the introduction of a teaching programme, is no less a social invention than the establishment of a political party or a new town. When referring to a social invention, Young suggests that development programmes – whether they be literacy programmes, teacher improvement programmes or new curricula – are human (and not scientific) constructs. In all human constructions, he suggests, we rely heavily on humans as the *locus* of decision making. PAR, as the name denotes, strives to ensure that the *human* emphasis of any intervention remains paramount.

4.3 PAR and its view of knowledge

The application of PAR to assessing project impact confirms the popular trend towards assessments that are participatory or collaborative. The new discourse assumed by the shift constitutes a radical break with positivist-inspired traditional approaches to impact assessment, which characterised the pre-Jomtien research agenda. Such approaches were based on what Romm (1986:70) terms a 'comprehension-then-application' approach. By this she means that the researcher arrives at a comprehension of a situation through following the procedures of scientific protocol and thereafter proceeds to manipulate the situation in accordance with what the researcher has (unilaterally) postulated as the correct comprehension of the situation.

In contrast PAR is squarely based a non-realist epistemological paradigm.5 PAR also requires the incorporation of action at the precise point of conceiving knowledge. This location identifies PAR as being (generically speaking) a multivocal or discursive method for arriving at 'true' knowledge (McKay & Romm 1992:90). It aims, as Udas (1998:603) explains, to introduce *humanness* into *human inquiry*. For this reason, the voices of practitioners are essential to the construction of knowledge. Argyris and Schön (1991: 86) summarise this idea by stating that the purpose of action research is to generate insights by working with practitioners within particular, local practice contexts in exercises which are relevant to local contexts. This is because action research 'takes its cues - its questions, puzzles, and problems - from the perceptions of practitioners ... [and it] bounds episodes of research according to the ... local context".

5 Application of PAR to the assessment of the MELLD project

As indicated above, every attempt was made in the execution of the **MELLD** assessment to apply the principles of PAR (to the extent that this was possible in the light of constraints on time, timeliness and resources).

5 This is based on the research presupposition that we do not have access to 'objective truth' - but that 'truth' (if it exists at all) can only be encountered through intersubjective encounters with 'other truths'.

5.2 The rationalisation underlying the identification of stakeholders and selecting the 'sample'

Because this was a *partnered* project, there were a number of stakeholders with varied interests and concerns. It was necessary at the outset to determine the stakeholders and then to select a 'sample'. It was possible to gain sensitivity to what *partners* and what *interests* were involved by means of discussions with the project management and an analysis of documentation. It was possible to request the project managers (prior to my arrival in the country) to confer with partner organisations and decide which stakeholders should be involved. This exercise enabled us to solicit the names of significant participants or organisations who were central to the programme.

It transpired that there was a large degree of commonality in the partners' lists, and this made it possible to design an approach which in some way included all identified stakeholders. The list of stakeholders included:

- officials from the Ministry
- project managers
- the implementing agents
- teachers
- teacher coordinators
- the British Council
- DFID the funding agency
- district supervisors
- other service providers

Since this investigation was not contingent on so-called scientific validification, the rigorous use of orthodox 'scientific' (realist) approaches was not considered pertinent to the selection of the 'sample'. A *rational sample* was selected and it was based on leads that were obtained by means of *snowballing*. Since PAR does not concern itself with generalisabilty, the emphasis in this assessment was on capturing the distinctive quality and substance of the voices of the various stakeholders. In the remainder of this paper, I will refer only to what I consider to be *primary* stakeholders, i.e. the trainers and the teachers themselves.

5.2 Constructing the instruments

It was necessary to engage stakeholders in the process of constructing the various instruments that were used. Initial interviews with core stakeholders were conducted - an exercise which was crucial in enabling me to become appropriately sensitised to the relevant issues. After I had conducted a second round of in-depth interviews with the trainers (attached to the implementing agents) and the project manager,[6] I began to get a good idea of what should be *observed* and what *criteria* should be used. Initial drafts of the instruments were compiled and were circulated among other project players. They went through a series of manipulations and refinements as different players provided input (this was a process that continued well into the research process).

6 Fortunately the responsible person in the ministry was able to visit South Africa on a few occasions before the formal assessment began.

While many researchers generally believe that only qualitative methods are appropriate for doing participatory research, this is not so. It is here contended that as long as the researcher is aware of the contestable/discursive nature of knowledge, the methods used for obtaining data are secondary. This is because action research is distinguishable from other research methods to the extent to which it strives to induce practitioners to confront issues which they may find problematic. It is in this sense that the methods employed by PAR are different from the usual ways of administering surveys or conducting observations. The distinction is dependent on the fact that non-action research does not have as its main goal the need to open the way for new forms of action. Thus, any form of data gathering is appropriate in PAR provided that

- it does not exclude participants, and
- it retains as its goal the implementation of action which is responsive to the issues that people are concerned about and which they want to discuss with others (Romm & McKay 1999:5).

Selener confirms this when he points out (1997:111) that action research does not follow any specific research formula. He states that the conditions in which they exist and the action researcher's preferences and criteria will determine the appropriateness of the method that will be used. Since this kind of open-endedness left us to choose from a whole gamut of possible research methods, it was necessary to formulate a research design according to which the **MELLD** investigation would proceed. The following four research methods were utilised:

Documentary study

1

This was necessary to address questions pertaining to the location, context, baseline measures and terms of reference of the project. It was necessary to undertake an examination of *documents* relevant to the areas under investigation. All *players* were able to suggest documents which were relevant to this stage of the research. The data obtained from the documents proved adequate to provide a *background* which was 'validated' in the second and subsequent phases of the investigation.

In-depth interviews/Focus group discussions

2

This method was useful both as a source of data gathering, as well as a means of 'validating' the context as defined by the documentary study. The *in-depth interviews* opened opportunities for engaging teachers in reflection. They were required to give their views about the impact of the new programme on their learners and on their practices. In the focus groups, teachers were required to reflect on problems which they encountered and to brainstorm ways of addressing these. The groupings also provided forums for initiating action.

Classroom observations

3

Observations were conducted at a number of project and non-project schools. These were coupled with interviews with groups of teachers who were asked to describe how they had experienced the process and to discuss how this had impacted on their teaching. In this situation it was necessary that the observation instrument be used as a 'negotiated' tool.

Self-evaluation questionnaires

4

These were administered to all teachers involved in the intervention in order to obtain their perceptions with regard to the variety of interventions, their limitations, etc. The administration of these was facilitated by the Namibian regional coordinators. Teachers were required to indicate problems which they had identified and to propose suggestions for improving the situation. This method was designed to obtain data from teachers, to stimulate their own reflections about their practices, and to suggest action for addressing a number of issues.

6 The 'fit' between the approach and the principles of PAR

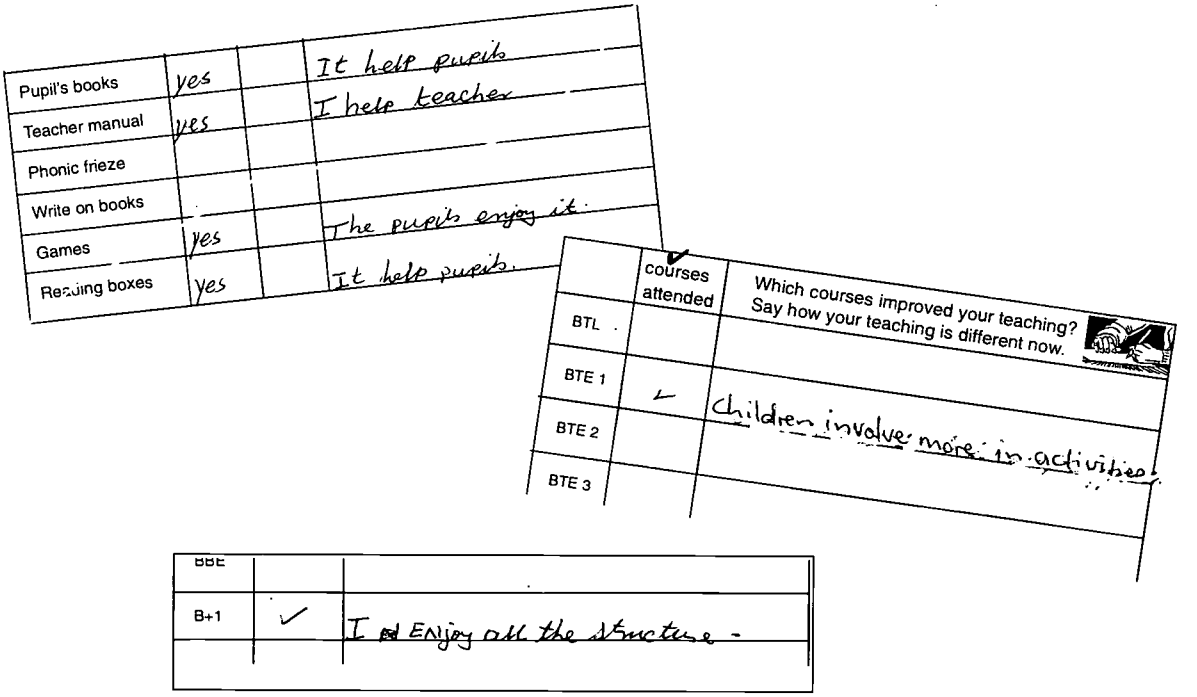
In spite of various constraints, it was nevertheless possible to comply with many of the requirements of the PAR approach.

- **The process of self-evaluation**

The self-evaluation questionnaire was administered to all teachers who were teaching on the **MELLD** programme. The survey was intended to induce reflection, tap into teachers' perceptions of project effectiveness and allow them an opportunity to identify possible problem issues. Since the self-evaluation component was conducted subsequent to the other processes, it was an additional invitation to induce reflection among teachers in their regional groups. Teachers were required to indicate:

- problems and suggested solutions
- changes in children's behaviour
- their perceptions of any changes in their confidence
- the ways in which their teaching had changed
- the kind of support they felt they needed
- their perceptions of the materials they were using and the fit between these and the national curriculum.

In compiling the questionnaire, we were sensitive to cautions by the trainers that the questionnaire should be *user friendly*, that the language level should be such that teachers (who might not have a good command of English) could understand what was being asked. Indeed some teachers had difficulty in writing. This of course impacted on their teaching and (of lesser importance) on their participation in the research enterprise.



Pupil's books	yes		It help pupils
Teacher manual	yes		I help teacher
Phonic frieze			
Write on books			
Games	yes		The pupils enjoy it.
Reading boxes	yes		It help pupils.

	courses attended	Which courses improved your teaching? Say how your teaching is different now.
BTL		
BTE 1	✓	children involve more in activities
BTE 2		
BTE 3		

BBE		
B+1	✓	I enjoy all the structure -

Focus groups

The group interview approach was intended to engage the teachers and coordinators (as well as other stakeholders) in a conversation in which the researcher encouraged them to relate, in their own terms, experiences and attitudes that were relevant to the project. This provided the opportunity to probe deeply and to explore various dimensions of the areas under investigation. The interviewer assumed the role of *facilitator* and ensured that the exchange gave individuals the opportunity to speak their minds and (also) to respond to the ideas of the other members of the group. In the course of a series of group interviews, respondents spoke about their perspectives and involvement, citing events and stages which they regarded as significant. The themes that were explored in the discussions were framed by the participants.[7]

The findings of the group interviews were of a collective/participative nature. While many researchers argue that this kind of *group-think* is one of the disadvantages of using group interviews, we regarded it as an advantage in this assessment since it offered opportunities for enriching the various nuances of the discussion. *Group-think* may be regarded as advantageous in the context of this assessment and in the context of the **MELLD** project because it concurred with the *group-based* nature of the programme and the *group-think modus operandi*. Interactions between the group members gave rise to ideas for action which may not have occurred to any single individual member reflecting alone.

7 Of course this did not preclude the interviewer from introducing topics.

The *group-think* function of also enabled a degree of validation to occur. Respondents were encouraged to debate contentious issues and the researcher was able to request the group to validate the final outcome these issues. Thus, for example, when groups were asked to identify reasons for the success or failure of various aspects of the programme, the debate enabled the group to solve many contentious problems in a 'controlled' environment and it also elicited new ideas for future project implementation.

- **Reporting**

It was clear that there was a need to *speak* to a number of different audiences through the report. Since we had a sense of the teachers' competence in English, we would have, preferred to publish the report in English and in one or more of the local indigenous languages. But this was not possible. What was possible, however, was to circulate draft copies of the interim reports to the regional groups of teachers through their coordinators. Each group was requested to discuss the document and to comment on it. It was possible for these discussions to take place in any languages that the groups wished to use. The comments that arose out of the initial drafts were sent to me and I was surprised by the extent to which teacher groups had responded. In my writing up, I attempted to incorporate all comments and requests – even if meant that I included conflicting opinions in footnotes.

Finally, I addressed issues pertaining to the accessibility of the document by incorporating large *chunks* of direct quotations – thereby letting teachers speak, as it were, for themselves. I also attempted to include case studies of typical teaching scenarios because these had elicited a substantial amount of commentary from the teachers. The following is an example of an authentic case study, which includes a problem about which teachers could reflect. This particular case study (taken from the report) also gave rise to a copious amount of commentary, especially on how to introduce a remedial teaching component.

CASE STUDY: MARY'S BREAKTHROUGH TO LITERACY (BTL) LESSON

Mrs Mary S had been teaching for 38 years and was nearing retirement. When we arrived at her school (one day early) she was initially reluctant to let us in to see her Grade 1 class. When the Principal directed us to the teacher next door, Mrs S pulled me in by the arm and requested me to visit her class.

We entered her sandy but happy classroom. There were clay models of buck and birds on the window sill and on the wall there were lots of pictures that the Grade Ones had drawn.

The children were in their four ability groups and were in the second stage of the BTL programme. The teaching group moved to the front of the room and sat on the grass mat. While Mary moved from group to group showing the learners what to do, there was a mini rumpus on the mat.

Two of the occupational groups were given sentences to write and the third group, the 'weakest' group in the class, was given a pile of words to copy. The lesson proceeded according to plan. The learners in the front of the room were deep in thought. They discussed the poster and read with great confidence. Eventually they returned to their desks to draw their pictures and write the new sentence they had learned.

Meanwhile, in the groups, a few rowdy boys and girls raced (also with confidence) through the writing of their sentences. They were trying to see who could copy the most sentences in their books. The race was on!
They had already illustrated their lesson topic and were practising to write their sentences.

But, as with all the BTL classes we saw, not a lot was happening in the 'weakest' group. One or two learners had scribbled a few squiggles on the page but not much else happened.

Mary S moved around and checked on the other two groups. They were doing really well. But all was not well with the third group. They just sat and sat.

In a later discussion with Mary, she explained to us that the new approach brought about such an improvement in her teaching. She had been using it for the past two years and wished that she had learned it earlier. But she said she did not know what to do with the 'weak' group.

7 Some difficulties encountered with the approach

The PAR approach to impact assessment is of course not without its own unique problems, which, in this case, were exacerbated by the constraints of time. These are some of the problems which I experienced.

- Collaborative efforts are by definition time consuming!
- It is often difficult to generate enthusiasm in collaborative situations.
- How does one stimulate people to participate in deciding criteria and outcomes if they are habituated to *not* participating?
- How do lay (local) people feel about participating in such evaluations when they are in the presence of 'experts'?
- Programmes of this kind often incorporate 'grass-roots' people who can neither read nor write. What is the best way to encourage them to participate on terms of equality with 'experts'?

In spite attempts to encourage participation I found it difficult to get teachers to participate (Moloney describes the same difficulty in her paper in this publication). Admittedly a rushed evaluation is not conducive to engaging participation, and such difficulties are compounded by the teachers' lack of basic skills. This lack is in itself a source of disempowerment. Teachers who were trained in the previously undemocratic era also lacked the requisite skills for participation. I therefore argue that the inability of teachers to participate (because of the skills that they may lack) is a problem that needs to be addressed.

While the methods of PAR depend on the development of *human empowerment* and *the belief in one's ability* to participate, there is a direct relationship between human agency (voluntarism), participation and development. For this reason, it is important that projects regard the development of *human agency* as being of equal importance to all other preconditions.[8] Development has to be firmly based on human well-being, an improved quality of life and significantly enhanced *self-esteem*. It has to resonate with the aspirations and needs of people as they are *defined* by the *people themselves*. It has been recognised that post-Jomtien research stresses the growing paradigm of participatory educational research. But this is contingent on the *will to act*. Informed acting or 'praxis' is brought about by *reflection* informing action.

7.2 Developing agency

While all the papers in this collection address educational needs as part of one or other development programme, it is here argued that development programmes that are considered independently of developing human *agency* will fail to take *the people* with them. In this regard, Berger (1969) stresses the importance of what he terms a 'developmental consciousness', which, he argues, should underlie all attempts to address problems of underdevelopment. It is imperative, he argues, that we address the 'human question'. While the provision of schools, infrastructure, and the enhancement of teachers' skills, is fundamental to our primary goal of development, transformation has to recognise the importance of the development of *human agency* and awaken to the importance of this at the local level. It is this which PAR hopes to achieve.

7 Conclusion

The use of PAR as an approach is *coming of age*. The collaboration embodied in PAR implies that the evaluation is informative for all players and can consequently make an important contribution to project sustainability. This is especially so if the design of the evaluation model is introduced as early as possible in the project – as a formative tool rather than a summative one. If this were done, it would have implications for the monitoring process because then the monitoring (leading to the impact assessment) could direct the project towards the desired outcomes.

8 Agency refers to the empowerment or ability of people to determine needs, to reflect on possible outcomes, and to act on them.

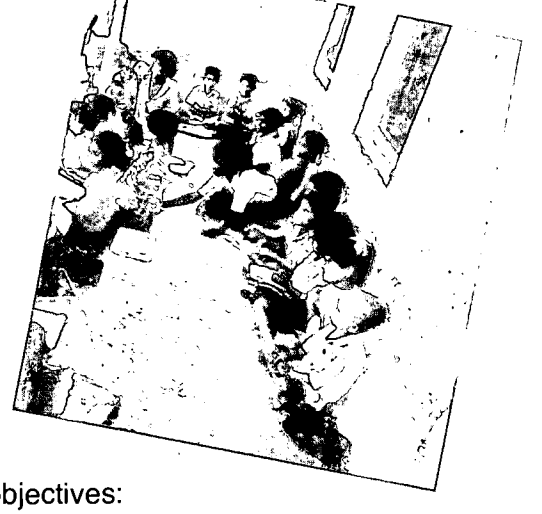
1.3 Participatory approaches to impact studies

Sasidhara Rao
Andhra Pradesh
District Primary Education Programme

In this paper, Sasidhara Rao outlines some of the processes and instruments used to evaluate the **Andhra Pradesh District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)**. The paper begins with a description of the aims of **DPEP** and then proceeds with a description of the various instruments used for the evaluation. The author provides a categorisation of the instruments used for the evaluation and locates them within the broad categories of quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This is coupled with an indication of the kinds of data that the particular instrument is intended to gather. The methods and the instruments used contribute in different ways to engaging participation at different levels and at different stages of the research enterprise.

The author stresses the importance of the evaluation process being guided by a participatory philosophy. He outlines the benefits of participatory research for participants and as a means of ensuring that quantitative data, such as the statistical descriptions obtained from the surveys, are contextualised because this contributes to the interpretation of such data. The paper also argues that the participatory nature of the study which was demonstrated by, for example, the various local studies conducted for the **DPEP** evaluation, conferred the advantage of enabling project participants to reflect on the project interventions in their own contexts. This, the author suggests, is both formative and necessary for making the recommendations relevant to unique local circumstances and consequently for enabling the development of capacity among practitioners at grass-roots.

1 Introduction



Major efforts are being made to implement Article 45 of the Indian Constitution, which provides for universal free and compulsory primary education for all children until they are fourteen years old. **DPEP** was one such intervention put in place to enable this goal to be realised in selected districts of the country.

The **DPEP** initiative had the following specific objectives:

- to reduce to less than 5% differences attributable to gender and social class in enrolment, dropout and learning achievement figures
- to reduce overall dropout rates for all learners to less than 10%
- to raise average achievement levels by at least 25% over the measured baseline levels
- to provide access, according to national norms, for all children to primary education in classes I to V

When the **DPEP** framework was formulated, special attention was given to programme features which ensured the contextuality of the programme by involving local area planning and community participation.

2 Interventions made by the Andhra Pradesh DPEP

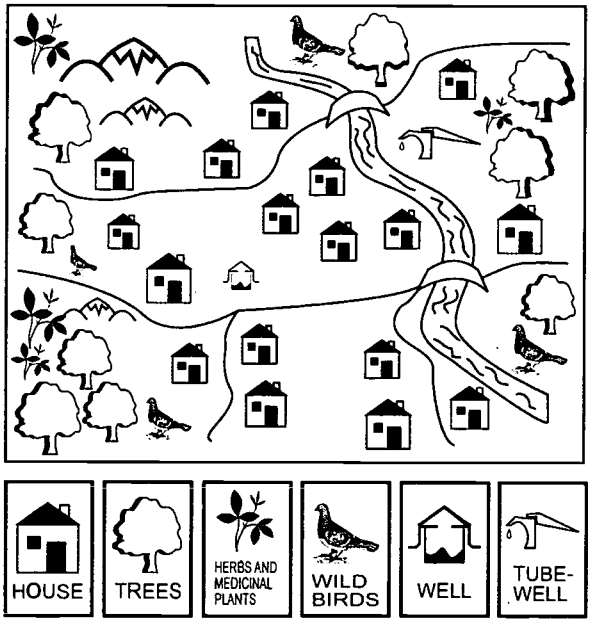
A number of changes were made to make provision for the achievement of increased enrolments and retention and to improve the quality of education. The following interventions were made by **DPEP** in Andhra Pradesh:

- the opening of schools and the provision of alternative school facilities in areas where there were no schools
- the construction of buildings, additional classrooms, toilets, and the provision of drinking water facilities
- the opening of ECE centres
- the organising of awareness campaigns
- the provision of teacher and schools grants
- the delivery of a teacher-training programme
- the implementation of bridging courses for children involved in *child labour*
- the provision of education for children with special needs
- the provision of support for school committees
- the appointment of education promoters for the *girl-child.*

3 The methodological design of the AP DPEP evaluation

In order to obtain information about the progress made by **DPEP**, a complex multi-layered research process was formulated.[1] The aim of the evaluation was to increase the use of evaluation data so that feedback would constantly flow back to the people involved in the programme. The evaluation was not intended to assess what *was done to people*. Its purpose was rather to involve all members of the community in assessing the effectiveness of **DPEP**. The study is longitudinal in the sense that the school and pupil surveys which were performed will be used in subsequent years in order to pinpoint whatever changes which may have occurred over the project's lifespan. One of the main aims of the survey was to provide essential reference data about the provision of education (**DPEP** nd:1). The surveys were used to obtain information from head teachers in the schools, from Village Education Committees (VEC), and, using the household surveys, from the communities themselves. The other aims of the survey were:

- to study the impact made by **DPEP** on the *educational achievement* of children throughout their school lives
- to observe how particular schools were *attracting* and *retaining* pupils
- to investigate the extent to which girls are *enrolled* and *retained*
- to obtain an estimation of how many pupils *drop out* of the system
- to quantify the degree to which pupils *successfully complete* their schooling



Adapted from DPEP. *Evaluation in Primary Education: A handbook for getting started* (p111).

In order to operationalise the above intentions, a research process was conceptualised. The enterprise was designed to enable the gathering of information from different sources in different ways. The evaluation comprised the following components:

1 This research design is described in detail in the DPEP (n.d.) *Evaluation handbook for getting started.*

- a quantitative component – comprising a series of surveys
- a qualitative component – comprising a set of long-term and short-term studies
- a priority component – certain indicators of implementation which identified priorities
- a participatory component – using the methods of *participatory rural appraisal* so that information could be collected quickly at grass-roots level. (In this way, **DPEP** was able to involve members of the community in assessing the effectiveness of the programme.)

31 Quantitative component

The *quantitative* component comprised the schools' and pupils' survey (SPS) to formulate a *picture* of **DPEP** in action. For this purpose four tools were prepared:

- a school questionnaire
- a classroom observation schedule
- a Village Education Committee survey
- a household survey.

Before the school and pupil surveys were administered in the field, they were piloted and then amended. The instruments were then used for the following purposes:

INSTRUMENT	PURPOSE
The school questionnaire	This was used for gathering information from the head teacher or other teachers, from school records and from the evaluators' direct observations.
The school classroom observation schedule	On three occasions during the year, observers visited each classroom to record which pupils were present at various times on a particular day. This exercise was necessary to obtain information about the regularity of attendance. The survey also gathered information about the gender and social groupings of the learners.
The VEC survey	This instrument was intended to give information on the potential school population. The survey is necessary to give accurate figures on the number of children aged between 6 and 11 who are live in the village.
The household survey	The household survey was administered to 10% of homes in the village. This survey was intended to enable the project to obtain information from the people living in the school catchment areas about the number of children living in the area, their social backgrounds and the economic status of the community.

The instruments were required to address the following issues:

Issue	INSTRUMENTS
The efficacy of the VEC's functioning	Interview schedule for Village Education Committee chairpersons, head teachers, additional project coordinators (APC), villagers and Village Education Committee members
The effectiveness of the mandal education offices (MEO) supervision and inspection	• Questionnaires to headmasters, teachers and MEO • Documentary analysis: the perusal of books, monthly minutes and books
The utilisation of schools and teachers' grants	• Interview schedule for Village Education Committee chairperson and committee members • Questionnaires for headmasters and teachers • Observation schedule • Matrix ranking
The utilisation of Class I Telugu textbook developed as part of the programme	• Questionnaire for teachers • Classroom observation • Pupil interviews
The functioning of Teachers Centres (TCs)	• Observation schedules on planning and management, time utilisation, teachers center (TC) activities • Questionnaire on activities of TC administered to teachers, and to participating MEOs, APCs, mandal resource person (MRP) secretaries, and assistant secretaries • Matrix ranking • Schedule of availability and use of equipment.

3.2 Qualitative component

The *qualitative* component includes the impact studies and an investigation into the functioning of certain structures. The long-term qualitative studies include establishing the impact study of **DPEP** on new schools, ECE centres and on teacher training programme.

The short-term studies included investigations into the

- functioning of VECs
- effectiveness of MEO's supervision
- utilisation of Class I Telugu textbooks
- functioning of TCs
- utilisation of school and teachers grants

Focus group discussions were held to determine the

- effectiveness of the functioning of VEC/ school education committees (SEC)
- ranking of schools
- needs in various areas

3.3 The participatory nature of DPEP

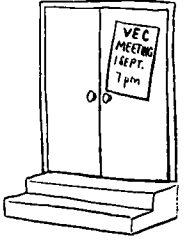
The evaluation was guided by a participatory philosophy which endeavours to involve all the participants in the preparation, finalisation and implementation of the evaluation programme. The design stressed the involvement of all members of the community in assessing the effectiveness of **DPEP**. The instruments were designed to gather information from parents, teachers, children, VEC members and the local community about their impressions of both the **DPEP** project and its evaluation programme. The evaluation included a series of observations of different activities of the teachers, pupils, VEC members and the community at large. Interviews were also conducted with these participants to gather data, and the documents used in the project were carefully and critically analysed (**DPEP** n.d.:9).

The research design was user-friendly, and made provision for those within the **DPEP** system – but who were external to the activity being assessed – to participate in the implementation of the evaluation. In this way, capacity was built across the system. The process relied, to a large extent, on primary rather than secondary data in the sense that the two of the main tools used were observation and interviews. The design also advocated the collection of data through the Mandal's resource personnel who are strategically placed at the Mandal level to support the teachers in their academic spheres. Recent legislation in Andhra Pradesh has meant that the VECs are to be replaced by SECs. Ultimately, the SEC, as a stakeholder, should monitor, guide, support and evaluate all the programmes relating to primary education at the grass-roots level. Moreover, to assess the children's learning progress, **DPEP** conducted learning achievement surveys which measured the performance of pupils' cognitive and noncognitive dimensions. The testing of learners' on the noncognitive level included testing factors such as team spirit, cooperation, accommodation, and peer group relations. This was done by developing testing instruments appropriate for the new methodology, the teacher-training component and the **DPEP**'s textbook – all interventions which were introduced by the project.

3.31 A process directed at participation

Because of the *participatory* emphasis of the **DPEP** evaluation, every attempt was made to ensure that:

- the needs and responses of the members were taken into account in determining the evaluation system
- local people were involved in the preparation of design



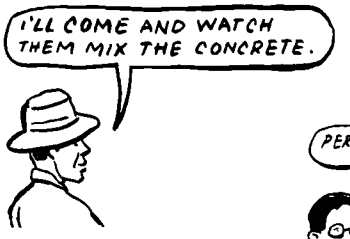
Well publicised meetings

Ensuring that all the VEC members come

Offering help to people

Being friendly and welcoming

Getting everyone involved



Supervising Civil Works

Being honest and open

Being responsible for all the children of school going age

Adapted from DPEP. *Evaluation in Primary Education: A handbook for getting started* (p151).

- local people received immediate feedback
- capacity building was emphasised at all levels
- people were prepared for self-evaluation
- the project involved primary users
- the design of the instruments were user-friendly
- on-the-job training was provided for evaluators
- local evaluators were employed
- applied research methods were used
- progress was measured at the local level
- local people were enabled to identify problems and work out their own solutions
- information was collected from community members by way of participatory rural appraisal methods – using activities like school mapping, Venn diagrams and seasonal maps
- social mapping was used to identify those who were left out of the programme as well as the non-starters. This social mapping attempted to explore:
  - reasons for non-enrolment and dropout
  - ways of identifying working children
- teachers, pupils, parents and community were involved
- the evaluation was done by the members internal to the system but external to the activity
- priority was given to primary rather than secondary data

- district evaluation teams (DIET) included DIET lecturers, MRPs, teachers, community members and NGOs
- the School Education Committee participated
- the MRC was used as an evaluation unit
- the tools developed for the evaluation were participatory in design
- teachers were involved in the pupils learning achievement surveys (surveys based on natural learning experiences, teacher training and textbook development).

4 DPEP interventions in Andhra Pradesh

DPEP made a number of interventions which benefited the community in Andhra Pradesh. These included:

- the opening of schools and the provision of alternative school facilities in areas where there had been no schools
- the construction of buildings and additional classrooms
- the construction of toilets and the provision of drinking water facilities
- the opening of ECEs
- the organisation of community mobilisation and awareness programmes
- the provision of teacher, schools, and teacher centre grants
- the training of teachers
- the implementation of bridging courses for children involved in *child labour*
- the provision of education for children with special needs
- the establishment of MRCs with two MRPs, one mandal child development officer (MCDO) and mandal literacy organiser (MLO) under the leadership of MEO
- the appointment of education promoters for the *girl-child*

5 Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt was made to outline some of the processes and instruments used to evaluate the **DPEP** programme. The paper describes the various instruments and attempts to locate them as being either quantitative or qualitative approaches to research. In addition, the paper gives an indication of the kinds of data that the particular instrument was intended to gather. The paper stresses the importance of the process being guided by a participatory philosophy. In this way, the information gained by using other techniques – such as the statistical descriptions obtained from the surveys – is contextualised so as to enable the interpretation of the data.

The participation of the **DPEP** evaluation was enhanced by local studies which, in addition to being sources of essential information, were useful in enabling people to reflect on their actions in their own contexts. This meant that the recommendations that were made were relevant to the unique circumstances of local communities and that, through this process, capacity among practitioners *at grass-roots* was enhanced.

14 Evaluation vs impact studies

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In this paper Varghese considers the distinction between an *evaluation* and an *impact study*.

He argues that an understanding of the distinction is necessary since it has implications for *who* conducts the assessment, *what* the practical utility of the findings of an assessment might be and *whose* interests are likely to be served by each type of assessment. He concludes by pointing out that the distinction will also have implications for whether or not the assessment is seen as part of the actual project and, consequently, whether or not *funding* will be allocated for it.

The author succinctly illustrates the distinction by drawing on case studies which depict different assessment strategies.

1 Introduction

It is necessary to start this paper with an attempt at defining the concepts of impact studies and project evaluation.

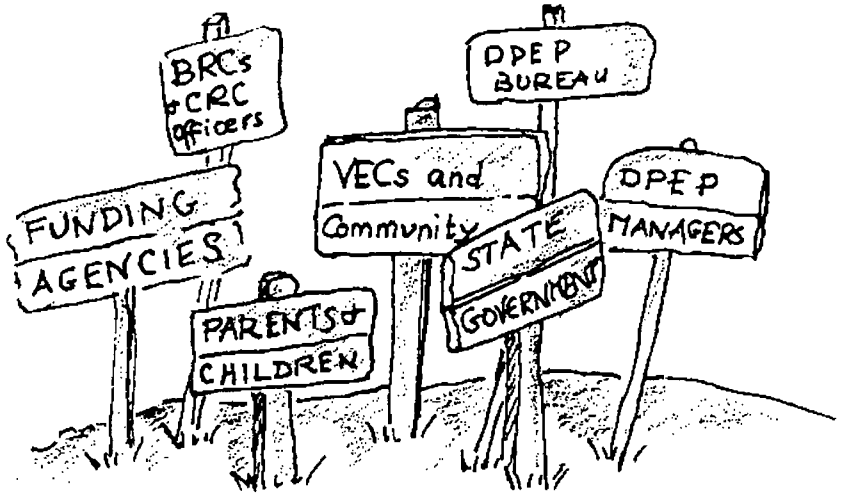
- Impact studies are concerned with the overall changes brought about by a project or programme. They are generally carried out after the project period is completed.

- Evaluation, on the other hand, focuses on achievement of targets of a project and assesses the effectiveness of intervention strategies which are followed by the project. Evaluation studies can be initiated either during implementation of a project or immediately after the project period is completed, depending on the purpose. If the evaluation is undertaken during the implementation of a project, we refer to it as a formative evaluation, and if it takes place after the project is concluded, we refer to it as a summative evaluation.

2 Assessing the achievement of a project

The following table shows the distinction between an impact study and an evaluation in relation to

- the project objectives
- the short- and long-term goals of the project
- stakeholder interest in the assessment



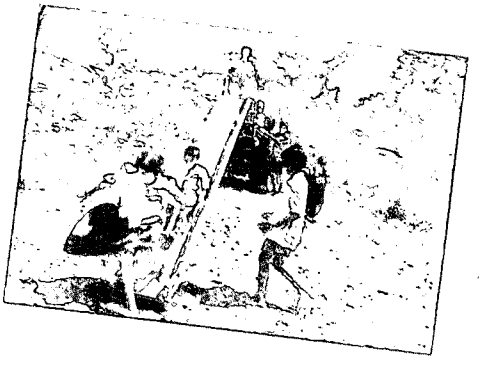
EVALUATION	IMPACT ASSESSMENT
The success or failure of a project is usually assessed on the basis of its stated objectives. Hence, both evaluation studies and impact studies cannot be independent of the project objectives.	
Evaluation studies usually confine themselves strictly to the boundaries stated in the project objectives and the implementation strategies.	Impact studies go beyond the narrowly stated objectives of the project.
The project matrix clearly indicates the immediate, intermediate and developmental objectives of a project.	
Evaluation studies generally focus on the immediate objectives of a project.	Impact studies usually attempt to assess the development of the project.
The funding agencies and the recipient countries may be interested in carrying out both types of assessment.	
Project managers in a funding agency may be more interested in assessing the cost-effectiveness of the intervention strategies and efficiency of the project management structure. For this reason, funding agencies may be more interested in evaluation studies.	The participants in a project and the recipient country may be more interested in an impact study. They would be more interested in the impact that an intervention makes on structures on the existing systems after the project period.
The different forms of assessment suggest different utilities for the findings.	
Evaluation studies provide an insight into the replicability of project intervention strategies and provide useful feedback for funding agencies if they wish to apply similar decisions to other countries or projects.	Impact assessment studies address themselves to systemic and long-term changes brought about by a project or programme. The impact may transcend the sectoral boundaries drawn by a specific departmental view of the problem. This is more so in the case of projects in social sectors like education since the object and subject of the project are human beings and their interactions.

21 Examples which illustrate the distinction between evaluation and impact studies

It may be interesting to base the distinction between evaluation and impact studies on certain examples. Let us take the case of an in-service teacher-training project.

An evaluation of the project may indicate the effectiveness of organisational arrangements created to train teachers on a regular basis. It may also indicate whether the project could succeed in training the pre-specified number of teachers as per schedule. On the whole, the evaluation will indicate the success of the project in terms of training the teachers. Policy makers are generally not concerned only about the training of teachers. They would like to know whether such training has led to improved curriculum transaction processes in the classroom (and therefore ultimately to increased levels of learner achievement). If this has happened, the INSET teacher-training may be adopted as a major systemic intervention in later periods. The impact study may focus on these aspects of the project rather than be confined to the immediate objectives of the project as in the case of evaluation studies.

Similarly, an evaluation of adult literacy programmes may indicate the total number of persons made literate by the programme. An impact study of the programme will focus on the social implications of the outcomes. It will attempt to discern, for example, whether the literacy programme led to the empowerment of illiterates and to their improved response to public provisions in sectors beyond education. It will also ask, for example, whether the reading habits of the community improved. These are questions more amenable to being assessed by way of an impact study, rather than by an evaluation study.



3 Methodology

The standard techniques used for measuring the impact of a programme are as follows:

3.1 The one group post-test design

The *one group post-test design* may be developed after the project period is over and it may be conducted an afterthought. However, such designs will not be in a position to indicate the rate or the degree of change brought about by the project since the initial *measurements* or pre-test results are not available to compare with the post-test results.

3.2 One group pre-test and post-test design

The *one group pre-test and post-test design* is useful for assessing the extent of the project's achievement among the beneficiaries. However, this design may not be able to indicate whether the changes brought among the beneficiaries are due to project intervention or to other factors outside the remit of the project, essentially because the design does not permit the capture of changes which have taken place in locations where the project has not been implemented. For example, we may notice an increase in enrolment in districts where the **District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)** is implemented in India. But the use of this type of design would not make it apparent to us whether such an increase in enrolment is due entirely to the **DPEP** intervention or whether the *Total Literacy Campaigns*, which were also initiated in India, have also contributed an impact.

3.3 Pre-test and post-test of treatment and control groups

The *pre-test and post-test of treatment and control groups* design may facilitate impact assessment based on:

- situations before the project implementation
- the progress made in project areas
- progress made during the corresponding period in the non-project areas

The actual contribution of the project, in any case, is equal to the total changes brought about in the project areas minus the changes that have taken place in non-project areas. Baseline assessment studies are therefore necessary to provide benchmark data to make comparisons at two or more points during the project implementation. A baseline study at the beginning will identify the indicators against which the progress and achievement of the project are to be assessed.

4 Impact assessment of social sector projects

Various aspects need to be taken into consideration with regard to the assessment of impact in social sector projects. They are as follows:

- **Human volition**

  Projects in social sectors like education deal directly with human beings and their unique behavioural patterns. This human volition means that the expected response pattern of beneficiaries is an assumption that is often taken for granted. In the event that the complexities of human behaviour are glossed over, the success of a project may depend on the extent to which the project design has reliably speculated about the expected response pattern of the actors involved in implementation, on the one hand, and beneficiaries, on the other hand. In terms of this, the achievement of the project objectives depends on how effectively the project design can accommodate the varied and changing responses to various project interventions. This means that attempts to define a blueprint for project design (especially for another location) is destined to be problematic.

  It if for this reason that the project design and the project implementation cannot be totally separated and divorced from the contextual features of the location and people where the project is to be implemented. Impact studies relying entirely on quantitative methodologies may have an inherent tendency to be narrow in perspective and insensitive to the developmental objectives of the project.

- **Processes vs outputs**

  Most of the project interventions in education are process-oriented. For this reason, it is important to decide whether or not the project impact has to be assessed in terms of *changes in the processes* or in terms of *outputs of the project.*

  For example, a project objective of improving learner achievement by, say, 25% over and above the present levels can be achieved either by focusing on a limited number of schools and selected students or by bringing about overall changes in school processes and classroom practices in all schools. Both types of intervention may indicate achievement of the quantitative target of the project. Impact studies need to be sensitive to these types of problems.

- **Qualitative vs quantitative research approaches**

  As indicated earlier, the developmental objectives of a social sector project are less amenable to easy quantification. The methodology to be adopted for impact studies therefore needs to be discussed and finalised. However, a totally non-quantitative approach may not give a clear idea of the social outcomes of the project. In assessing impact, a trade-off must be made between quantitative and qualitative techniques. The question of which form of data collection to use, needs to be discussed broadly with participants before the assessment design is finalised.

- **Unintended outcomes**

  Any project intervention may produce unintended social outcomes. These can be either *positive* or *negative*. The implications of these consequences may not be confined to the sector in which the project has been initiated. For example, many primary education projects activate the local community and empower members to participate in development activities. Even when project targets are not fully achieved, such mobilisation may have a positive impact on the public intervention policies in other sectors. Evaluations which focus on narrowly defined project objectives and which use mainly quantitative techniques may not be in a position to make any assessment in this regard. For example, the **DPEP** interventions are pro-poor in nature. It would, however, be interesting to assess whether investment in primary education does indeed contribute to poverty reduction.

5 Who should do impact assessment studies?

Who should do an impact assessment? is a question that is often asked. The funding agencies, recipient countries or independent bodies may all do impact studies. However, as mentioned earlier, funding agencies may be more interested in evaluation studies and the recipient countries may be more interested in impact studies. It is possible that independent professional groups may be able to provide a more detached and objective view of the long-term implications of a project and that the impact study may be facilitated by independent bodies with or without the support of local level programme implementers.

This does not preclude the possibility of project *players* participating in an impact assessment. Since impact studies are conducted after the project has been implemented, they deal less with the details of project implementation and more with changes in the field. It is for this reason that even those players who participated in the actual implementation of the project will, in all probability, be more objective.

6 Conclusion

This paper was intended to highlight a distinction between what we understand as an *impact study* and a project *evaluation*. The distinction is necessary since it has implications for *who* conducts the assessment, *what* the practical utility of the findings of an assessment might be, and *whose* interests are likely to be served by each type of assessment. Finally, the distinction will also have implications of whether or not the assessment is seen as part of the actual project and consequently, whether or not funding will be allocated for it.

2

THE ROLE OF BASELINE STUDIES IN IMPACT ASSESSMENT

21 School focused baseline assessments as a catalyst for change

Carol Moloney
Link Community Development Education Programme
South Africa

When **Link Community Development (LCD)** initially began to conduct baseline surveys of the inservice training programmes which they facilitated, they used the data they obtained primarily for providing benchmarks against which future change could be assessed. This was in accordance with what a baseline is meant to be able to do: it has to enable the *measurement* of the impact of an intervention against the data obtained from the baseline.

However, with experience, **LCD** began to recognise the value of participatory baseline surveys as developmental processes in themselves. It was found that the baseline could enable teachers to gain new knowledge about their situation and about the changes needed – while at the same time empowering them to manage such change.

This paper begins by outlining how a baseline study can serve as a catalyst for change through enabling teachers to shift to new educational paradigms. Drawing on the **LCD**'s experience in South Africa, the paper shows the advantages of including a developmental component into the *doing* of a baseline. The author argues that it both enhances the ownership of proposed project interventions and it also serves as *educational tool.*

Throughout the paper, Carol Moloney shows how her experience in training South African teachers to do baseline studies has achieved benefits which go beyond the mere acquisition of data. She elaborates on how the **LCD** approach provides a *modus operandi* for *doing* collaborative baseline studies and for fulfilling its expressed intention of obtaining data needed to inform the proposed intervention. The author argues in addition that the inclusive participatory activity requiring the collaboration of various stakeholders confers the added benefit of developing the participant's sense of ownership. All of this, she argues, is necessary for ensuring the sustainability of any proposed project.

1 Introduction

In 1994, when **LCD** first began conducting baseline surveys of the inservice training programmes which they facilitated, they used the data they obtained primarily for providing benchmarks against which future change could be assessed. There was a need to assess the impact of their programmes both for the participants themselves and for funding agencies who required proof that resources were being effectively utilised. With experience, **LCD** has recognised the value of participatory baseline surveys as developmental processes in themselves. This paper begins by outlining how a baseline study can serve as a catalyst for change.[1] In these instances, baseline studies are intended to show where there may still be room for improvement. (See cartoon drawings in section 3 for a depiction of the process.)

LCD stresses the importance of undertaking a school-focused baseline assessment of the situation in schools before an intervention programme begins. The study involves both

- confidential interviews with representatives of all school stakeholders, and
- classroom and school observations which lead to the development of school profiles.

The primary function of a baseline assessment is to obtain an initial assessment mechanism against which subsequent evaluations can be measured. Although this assessment is relevant for funders and delivery agents, its greatest use is that project participants such as teachers, principals and learners themselves are able to assess the degree of improvement in their schools which has been caused by their own efforts. *People-centredness* may often remain at the level of documentary rhetoric – while programme objectives are decided far from the site of delivery. The baseline is a way of linking the aims of a project with practice.

Because the baseline process deals in depth with an analysis of needs it inadvertently also deals with an analysis of unforeseen issues and difficulties that frequently arise. To ignore these is to ignore the reality of beneficiaries' lives. Since beneficiaries, as Escobar (1995:107) points out:

> *... are socially constructed prior to the agent's (planner, researcher, development expert) interaction with them. .... This does not deter the agent or institution from presenting the results of the interaction as facts, that is, true discoveries of the real situation characterising the client.*

1 It is important to note at this point, that since LCD would like to see itself as a learning organisation it has built in a component dealing with baseline studies as part of its teacher development programmes.

(In section 5 of this paper, I present a case study which highlights some of the difficulties encountered with the implementation of a baseline study undertaken in Soshanguve in South Africa. The case study illustrates how, by ignoring the difficulties, the problems encountered in the process were compounded.)

2 Baseline surveys as a precursor to an intervention

Participatory baseline surveys endeavour to ensure that recommendations for change are based on a shared perception of the reality of the classroom. Teachers are often viewed as passive agents in the change process. Dalin (1990) suggests that such a philosophy rests on the following assumptions:

- Schools are seeking to improve and will recognise inputs as being beneficial to them.
- Technocratic issues take precedence over ideological questions.
- The teacher will mechanistically implement the changes produced for him/her by others further along the chain.

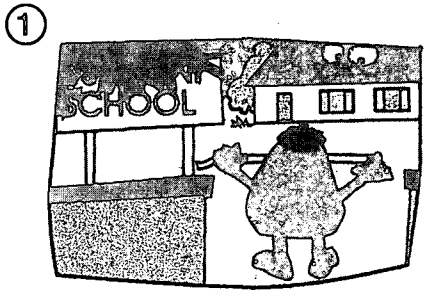
Compared to policies and procedures produced in unknown places by faceless administrators, an inclusive baseline – as an immediate, tangible process – is very powerful. Teachers find out that *they* can actively shape the form and content of the reform programme (the alternative to this is that they are *consulted* or informed by a faceless person unconnected with their own classroom about decisions which affect their practice). It is with the dangers of this in mind that **LCD** conducts baseline studies in which team members are included from the very start of the process, i.e. from as early as the first contact with the school right through to the design of tools to be used and the interpretation of the findings. This view is supported by Bradley and Earl (1995:171) who emphasise that direct participation is necessary in the actual 'nuts and bolts' of the process, since this 'enhances the likelihood of practitioners seriously coming to terms with the meaning of the data collected and its implications for the programme and organisational practice'.

3 Collaboration as essential to the baseline process

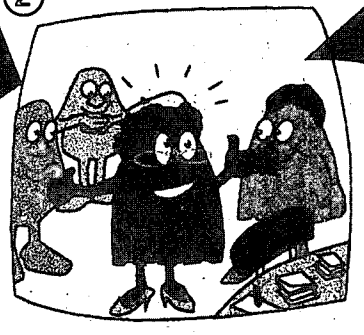
One of the greatest strengths of a participatory baseline process is that its success is dependent on the collaboration of various parties. In the **LCD** process, a wide number of stakeholders are consulted (**LCD** 1997). Thus, for example,

- teacher unions are consulted for permission to appraise teachers in the classroom.
- departmental officials work closely with teachers who are engaged in assessing the teaching-learning environment.
- principals are requested to allow teacher evaluators who are elected by their peers to assess the situation in their schools.
- teachers themselves assess their peers and ratify their perceptions in collaboration with the external agents and the rest of the teaching staff.

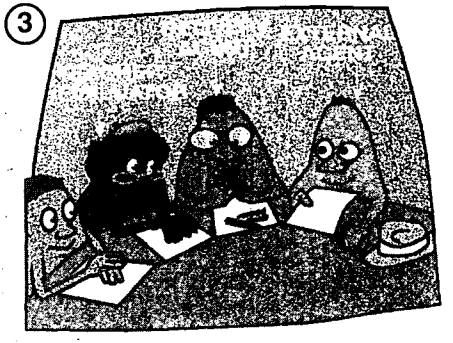
STAGES OF A BASELINE



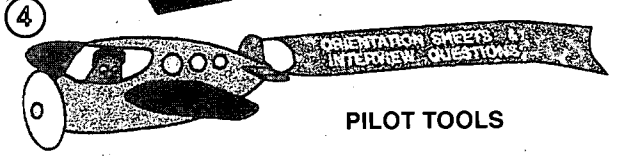
① INTRODUCTION TO SCHOOLS



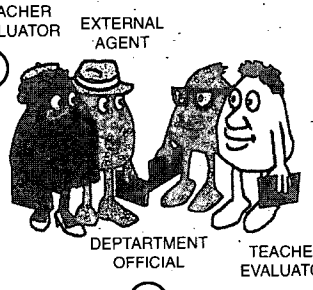
② ELECTION OF TEACHER EVALUATORS



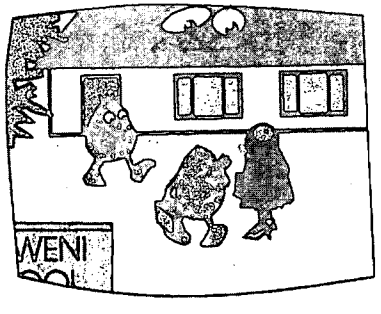
③ MEETING OF EVALUATION TEAM



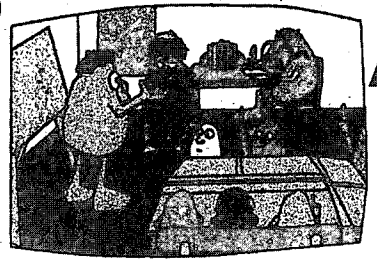
④ PILOT TOOLS



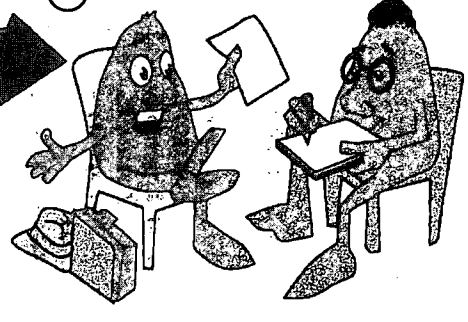
TEAMS ARE ARRANGED ENSURING A BALANCE OF SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE.



⑤ LOGISTICS WORKSHOP ARRANGE TEAMS ETC.

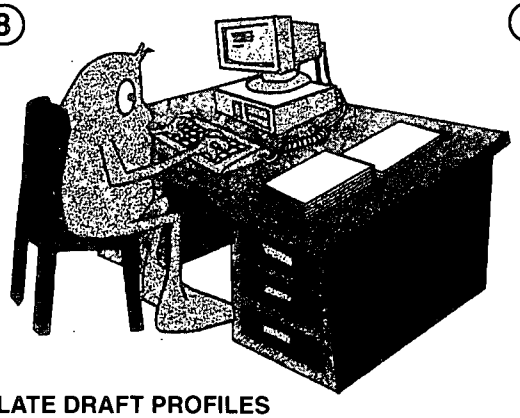


⑥ ONE DAY IN EACH SCHOOL- OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

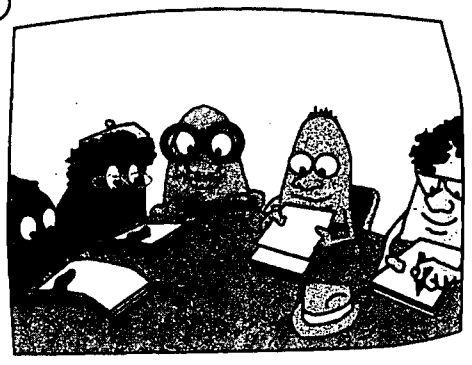


⑦ INTERVIEWS WITH EX-TERNAL STAKEHOLDERS AND DELIVERY AGENTS

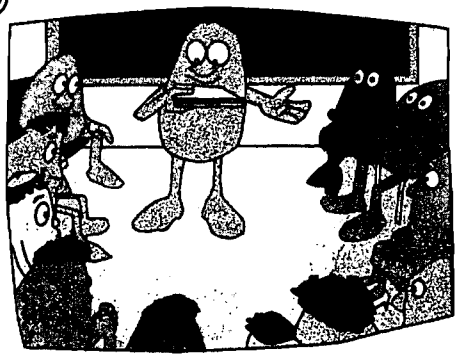
School focused baseline assessments as a catalyst for change



⑧ COLLATE DRAFT PROFILES



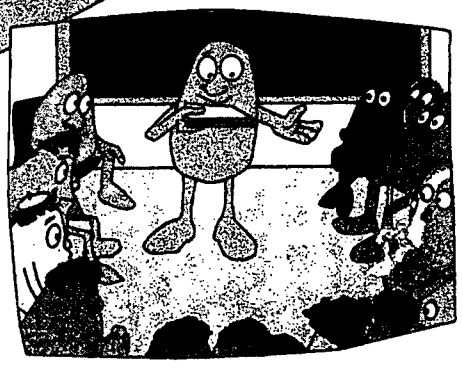
⑨ WORKSHOP DRAFT PROFILES WITH EVALUATION TEAM.



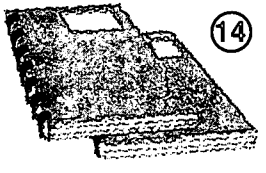
⑩ WORKSHOP DRAFT PROFILES WITH WHOLE STAFF IN SCHOOL

⑪ INCORPORATE CHANGES TO DRAFT REPORT

⑫ DRAW OUT RECOMMENDATIONS COLLABORATIVELY.

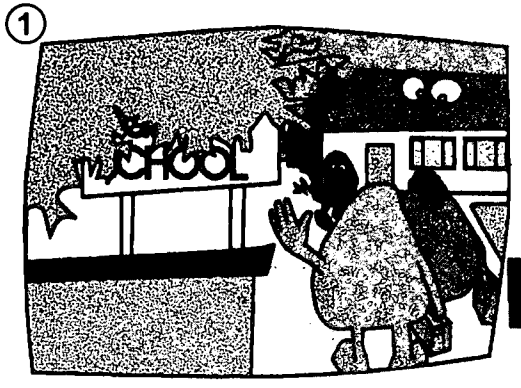


⑬ WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS.

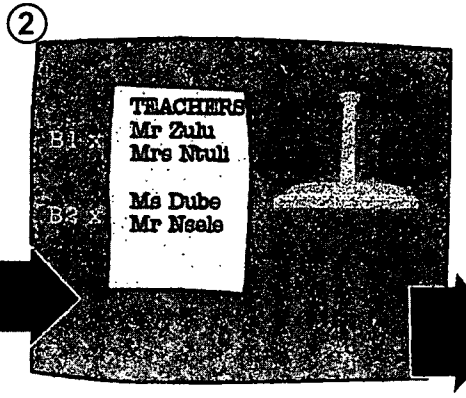


⑭ INTEGRATE LEARNING INTO PROJECT DOCUMENTS AND STRATEGY

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A BASELINE

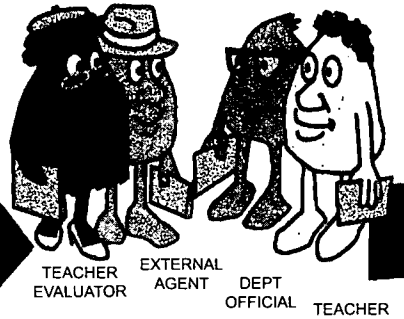


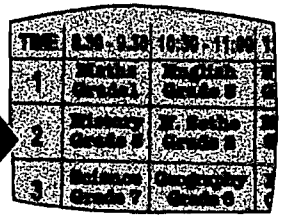
EVALUATION TEAM ARRIVES AT SCHOOL ON AGREED DATE



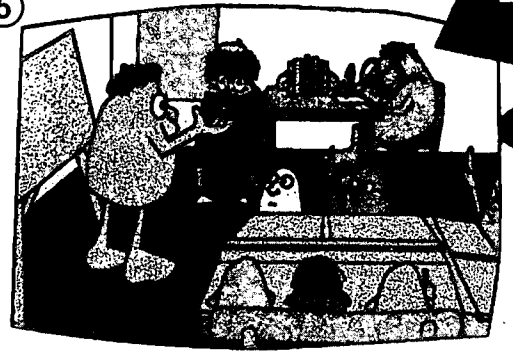
RANDOM SELECTION OF TEACHERS MADE, ENSURING A BALANCE OF SUBJECTS & GRADES. APPROX 25% OF TEACHERS VISITED.

TEAMS ARE ARRANGED ENSURING A BALANCE OF SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE.

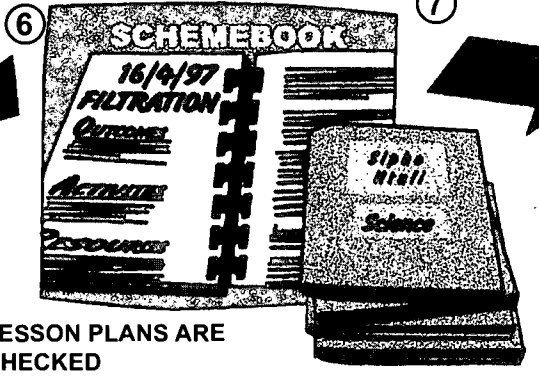




CLASSROOMS VISITS ARE TIMETABLED THAT MORNING.

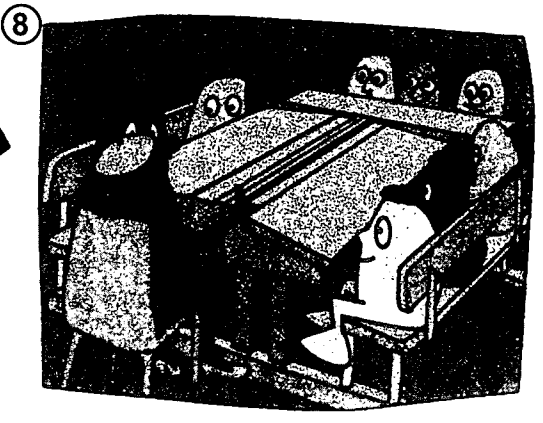


CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FOR 1-2 LESSONS.



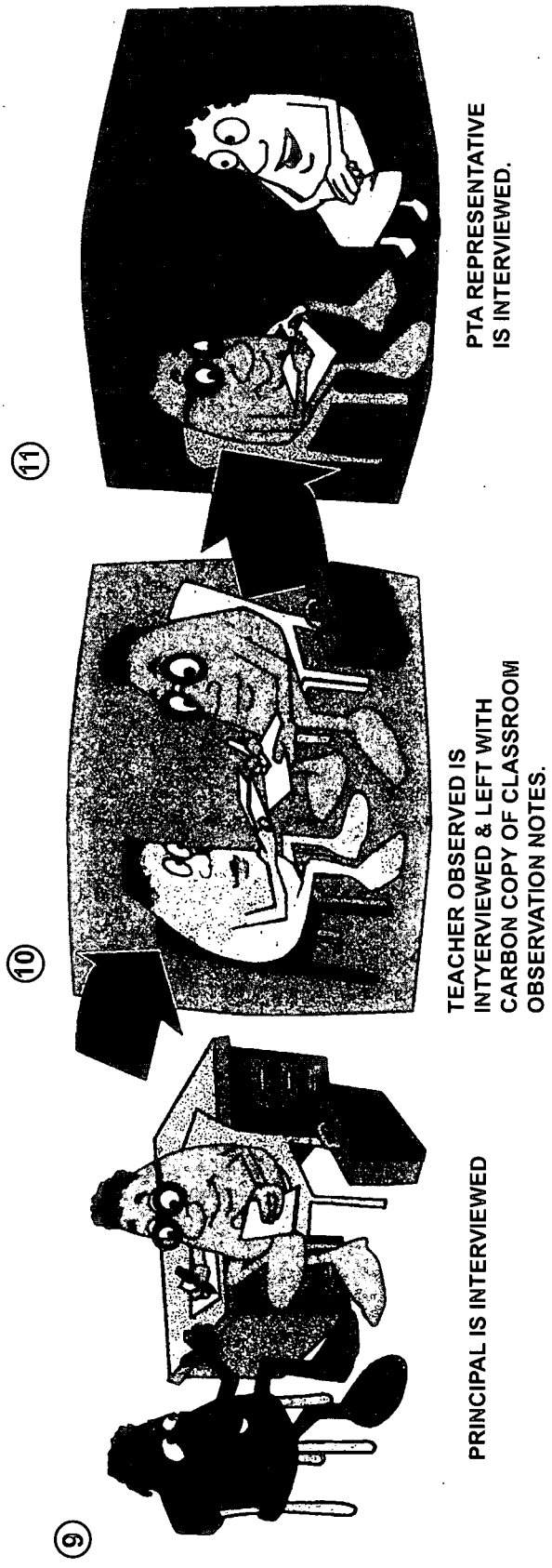
LESSON PLANS ARE CHECKED

PUPILS' BOOKS ARE CHECKED



GROUPS OF PUPILS FROM LESSONS OBSERVED ARE INTERVIEWED

School focused baseline assessments as a catalyst for change



This degree of intense collaboration in which various parties not only actively participate but are respected for their contributions, is an extremely valuable practice in itself, especially in the South African context. Sectors such as teacher unions, the education department and teachers in South Africa, have historically viewed each other with suspicion. The **LCD** baseline survey facilitates their working together on a joint venture. This shared process allows each party greater insight into the viewpoint and reality of the other and is important for establishing the trust needed for effective collaboration. According to Fullan (1991:79), after such a process,

> *teachers and others know enough now not to take change seriously unless central administrators demonstrate through actions that they should ... the policy maker on the one hand and the local practitioner on the other hand ... to the extent that each side is ignorant of the subjective world of the other, reform will fail.*

At its best the baseline provides this opportunity to demonstrate commitment to changes advocated and, more importantly, commitment to a collaborative development and understanding of those changes. The practical nature of its application provides a *reality check* for those involved in educational reform. **LCD** works from a belief that growth in the education sector depends on the inclusion, commitment and energy of its constituent members; obviously no one group can develop in isolation from another, all are mutually dependent. The baseline is an opportunity to bring these parties together to share skills and experiences and to develop a shared vision. One of the factors which guides **LCD**'s decision to choose an inclusive, participatory approach to the evaluations they facilitate, is their belief that their recommendations will have a greater chance of being put into practice if those who are to implement the changes trust the process which led to the resultant findings. There is a need for shared experience if one hopes to develop the kind of trust which underpins collaboration (Shula & Wilson 1995:138). The type of collaboration required to successfully conduct a participatory evaluation ensures that token gestures of involvement will be avoided.

4 An application of Vygotsky to baseline studies

Vygotsky's (1934) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) can be drawn on to explain **LCD**'s approach to evaluation. Vygotsky recommends that teachers work in the learner's Zone of Proximal Development. Vygotsky postulates that, through structured interactions known as scaffolding the teacher is able to facilitate the development of the learner's understanding and ability to perform a task which s/he would not have been able to do alone but will be able to perform independently after the interventions take place. It is believed that the learner's performance is, in part, a result of the setting and type of support offered.

> *The ZPD is not an attribute of an individual ... but rather the attribute of an event. ... Actual and potential levels of achievement are never just a reflection of an individual's cognitive potential and learning strategies, but are always also a measure of the strength of the cultural frameworks that supports that learning (Mercer 1994:103).*

Just as Vygotsky's theory of ZPD will underpin the approach to be adopted when assessing learners involved in the programme, it is also the guiding vision of teacher participation. As members of the evaluation team undertake the baseline assessment of their schools, teacher evaluators are being asked to work within their own zone of proximal development. Framed within a child-centred philosophy, elements such as the formative assessment of learners, focusing on learning outcomes, and incorporating divergent elements into this process encompass a process which will take teachers beyond their pedagogical and, for many, their philosophical comfort zone. This is a move consistent with *outcomes-based education* (OBE) which is required of South African teachers – but to which little thought appears to have been given.

5 Using the baseline study to introduce changed practices

One of the important policy changes of the education department under the democratically elected government in South Africa is that it has addressed the problem of poor teacher practice. Several policy innovations have been introduced to enable this. The policy requires that teaching shifts, from being content-driven and teacher-centred, to being outcomes-based and learner-centred. How this paradigm shift will be successfully implemented on a large scale remains an enigma.

Enabling teachers to shift from their current content focus towards an outcomes orientation within the broader system of a country's education presents an enormous challenge. If the reconceptualisation of philosophy and the practical changes required are to be sustained – and if they are not going to be superficially adopted as token elements of the 'new order', then teachers have to be given opportunities which allow them to internalise what this shift might mean. They will also have to be given opportunities to

try out new approaches in a safe environment. The focus on specified learner-outcomes and on the achievement of *critical outcomes*[2] in accordance with South Africa's OBE curriculum is central to **LCD**'s conception of the baseline assessment.

The inclusion of this alternative philosophy in **LCD**'s baseline studies enables those involved in the evaluation to reflect on their understanding of the curriculum shift and to test out the skills required to implement changed practice. Consequently, as well as enhancing ownership of proposed project interventions, participatory evaluations can also serve as an *educational tool.* **LCD** thus works on the premise that through including teachers in the baseline, the new skills attained and the reflections induced go some way to facilitating the paradigm shift that teachers are required to make within the new dispensation. Hence **LCD** argues that participatory baseline evaluation procedures have potential long-term benefits. In more immediate terms, a baseline evaluation provides the space for educators to reflect, expand their repertoire cognitively and practically, and be supported during this process.

Collaboration is not the panacea of educational reform. To undertake such a process leads educationists along a sharp incline of learning, along a path filled with potholes. One cannot simply sail to the end of the road and hope to encounter sustained success. One of the reasons for this is that people are not accustomed to collaborating. Participation is a skill that disadvantaged South African teachers need to learn. They need to learn to be transparent with colleagues and with themselves, to share, and to listen. These are stepping stones which should be acknowledged and planned into the process. Failure to do so can create frustration and resentment on all sides. Having personally erred by not having built in these skills, I have become very aware of the pitfalls of participatory ventures. I will draw on the following account of the Soshanguve[3] baseline to illustrate lessons to be heeded for future ventures.

5.1 CASE STUDY of a baseline study undertaken in Soshanguve

Perhaps it is because I come from a teaching background myself that, in this project, I had far greater empathy with the teachers involved than with the Department officials who were to participate. Consequently, when undertaking this project, I took far more care to ensure that the participating teachers were encouraged to contribute to the process and that their contributions were valued. I also took care to ensure that that they understood what was required of them, and saw to it that they felt sufficiently confident of the support system we provided.

In retrospect, I realise that this same consideration was not offered to the seven departmental subject advisors who were included in the evaluation team. If participation is to work effectively, all participants should feel comfortable with the approach. We at **LCD** recognised that, for the team which was brought together for this assessment

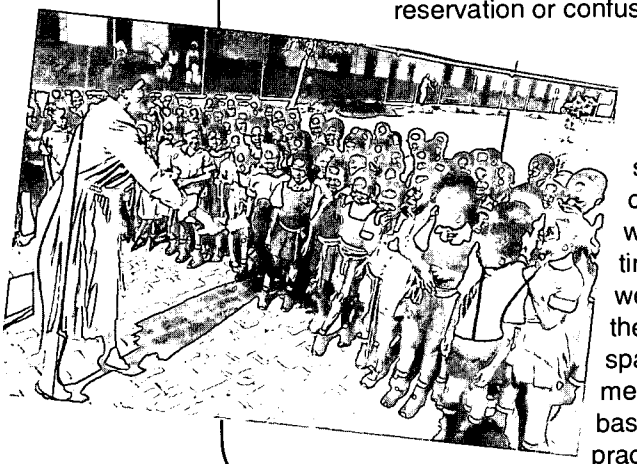
2 The critical outcomes are internalised via the teaching-learning process: they deal with learners being able to solve problems, work in a team, collect, evaluate and communicate information etc.

process, this level of inclusivity constituted quite a radical change in methodology: teachers were accustomed to *receiving knowledge* from the Department and the latter was used to transmitting this. Such an arrangement ensured that no one really had to deal with the situation on the ground. This in turn meant that neither the Department officials (espousing reforms) nor the teachers on the receiving end felt confident about implementing new innovations in the classroom.

The practical nature of the preparatory baseline workshops where, for example, indicators of effective teaching were being developed, expected all participants to demonstrate their understanding of the reality in the classroom. Naturally on 'home ground', the teacher-evaluators felt quite confident with the task and made relevant and creative contributions. It was notable, however, that despite encouragement, the majority of the Department officials declined to take part. This marked the start of a pattern which was to re-emerge on different occasions during the two-week workshop. For example, the District subject advisors would constantly retreat to working and talking amongst themselves – even though they were paired with teachers for various activities.

Another shortfall of the Soshanguve baseline was that the intensity and pace of the assessment process, once underway, did not really allow for reflection-in-action (Schon 1983). Hence their energies were devoted to reflecting on the *product*, the findings in schools and on creating accurate pictures of typical scenarios. They were not concerned about the *process* of going about change. Fullan (1991) points out that change agents who fail to reflect critically on how they go about change, *lose out* on improving their situations and on a lot of learning.

Having had the opportunity to reflect, I realised retrospectively that **LCD** had erroneously moved too quickly from the process of preparing the evaluation team to undertake the school-based baseline assessment to the formation of a joint forum (of teachers and department officials) once an agreement and initial contacts had been signed. This rapidity did not allow the Department officials to work through their understanding in the relative comfort zone of the Department. It is possible that, because teachers felt less was expected of them, we noted only minimal hesitation on their part to express reservation or confusion. Some of the officials, on the other hand, felt a great reluctance to expose gaps in their knowledge or skills and contributed with excessive caution. It was quite evident at that time how disempowered the process left the subject advisors with regard to the new curriculum reforms with which they themselves were grappling while they were, at the same time, being expected to train teachers. What we were indeed failing to do, in terms of Fullan's theory, was to allow the subject advisors the time, space and support required to develop their own meaning about the changes that the participatory baseline assessment would imply for their own practice.



3 Soshanguve is a township north of Pretoria in South Africa. It was a township developed during the apartheid era as a black urban settlement area. The township is disadvantaged and a large portion of the population live in squatter and informal settlements. The name of the township is an acronym formed by taking the first letters of the different ethnic groups living in the area (The Sotho - So; the Shangaans - Shang and the Venda - Ve.) This was characteristic of the 'creative names' used by the apartheid regime.

The difficulties encountered by the participants could be explained by the following quotation taken from Fullan's (1991:31) citing of Marris (1975):

> *When those who have the power to manipulate changes act as if they only have to explain, and when their explanations are not at once accepted, shrug off opposition as ignorance or prejudice, they express a profound contempt for the meaning of lives other than their own. For the reformers have already assimilated these changes to their purpose, and worked out a reformulation which makes sense to them, perhaps through months and years of analysis and debate. If they deny others the chance to do the same, they treat them as puppets dangling by the threads of their own conceptions.*

I make no apologies for citing this quotation at length as I feel it holds the key to much of the success or failure of development progress. Any change process needs to budget adequately for the time and support such a shift in philosophy and practice requires. In reality **LCD** is working within the ZPD of both the subject advisors and the teachers. It is the responsibility of the **LCD** to ensure that the learning of all those involved is scaffolded during the evaluations they lead.

The failure to do just this became evident when, as with Vygotsky's theory of ZPD, the *learner* – in this case the Department officials – attempted to enact the baseline process independently. Although the Department coordinator thought that she was replicating a participatory evaluation approach, the lack of internalisation of the concept of *participatory* was evidenced by the authoritarian mode that she proposed. Principals and teacher unions from the District rejected the process and requests were made for the **LCD** approach to be followed. This highlights how a participatory baseline survey cannot be viewed as an isolated event, but rather as one step in an on-going developmental process. Fullan (1991:92) cogently sums this up by indicating that 'ownership in the sense of clarity, skill and commitment is a progressive process. True ownership is not something that occurs magically at the beginning but rather is something that comes out the other end of a successful change process.'

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, it must be restated that the approach used by **LCD** in undertaking baseline studies is predicated on the premise that reflection has to be grounded in a philosophy which prioritises collaboration and learner-centredness and which is procedural. Although this approach provides a *modus operandi* for doing baseline studies, it still fulfils its expressed intention of informing the proposed intervention. The inclusive, participatory activity requiring the collaboration of various stakeholders is crucial to developing a sense of ownership among all stakeholders. It also helps to encourage a collaborative mode which is engendered by the participants having to work through the various stages of the baseline assessment. It is here argued that the baseline, both as a *modus operandi* for doing baseline and as well as a research approach for informing

proposed interventions, is a process which is necessary for ensuring the sustainability the proposed project. Collaboration and sharing cannot be underestimated in the South African context. Should they be underestimated anywhere at all?

2.2 A general framework for evaluating educational programmes

Samir Guha Roy
Indian Statistical Institute

In this paper, Roy points out that programmes that engage the *community* in actual intervention to improve education delivery are relatively new. He argues that while the participatory nature of the **DPEP** programme has gained ground through this kind of intervention, there are nevertheless a number of limitations on *non-scientific* approaches when attempts are made to assess impact.

The author begins by drawing attention to the *hierarchy of objectives* of intervention programmes. He suggests that evaluators usually steer away from addressing the difficult issue of *impact* (that may be caused by many factors apart from the programme activities), and he points to the difficulties inherent in distinguishing between possible activities which might be responsible for influencing changes. Roy suggests various ways of controlling an investigation so that the impact of project activities can be evaluated, and he argues that, in the domain of project assessment, there is a growing interest in the *scientific evaluation* of such programmes. The paper concludes with a proposal of how impact can indeed be assessed by using *scientific methods*.

1 Introduction

Efforts which engage the community in intervention programmes intended to improve the delivery of education are relatively new, but since the introduction of the **District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)**, there has been a growing interest in the scientific evaluation of such programmes. To develop a systematic and sustainable framework for evaluation, a wide range of people at different levels needs to be involved in the creation of an *evaluation culture*. Because of this, certain activities relevant to human resources development need to be initiated with a view to evaluating the mid-term and end-of-project impact. Because of the community focus of **DPEP**, training needs to be undertaken at the most local level (i.e. teacher and village level). If this is done, then qualitatively upgraded human resources can become effective partners in sustainable programmes.

The general principles of programme evaluation apply in the field of education (as they do in other fields). These include

- defining the objectives of the programme
- selecting the criteria by which performance can be judged and defining the methods of measuring them
- deciding on the logic or design of evaluation
- collecting and analysing data (such as test scores and socio-economic background information)
- providing interpretations of the findings to the programme administrators

2 Evaluating project objectives

As in other fields, an intervention programme may be evaluated in terms of a *hierarchy of objectives*. A programme is usually conceived as having an ultimate objective. From this objective, a series of subsidiary objectives is derived. Each of the sub-objectives (or programme execution objectives) is a means of achieving the objectives at the next higher level, and these objectives may be termed *programme impact objectives*. This type of conceptualisation makes the programme evaluation process more orderly and sensitive.

Evaluations seldom address the difficult issue of impact because many factors in addition to programme activities may be responsible for influencing change. This problem may be overcome by using:

- **Control groups**
  One possible approach to overcoming this problem is through the use of classically designed *action* and *control* groups. If the vagaries of social and economic changes unrelated to the programme are to be properly accounted for, it is necessary to introduce replication and use several control and experimental areas.

- **Baseline data**
  Another way of overcoming this problem is by concentrating on obtaining firm baseline data before the programme is initiated and periodically thereafter so as to detect any trends.

- **Factorial concept of experimentation**
  A more effective approach is the factorial concept of experimentation in which all possible combination of factors are investigated. Assessment of students' academic achievements is an important component of impact study. The concepts of *item bank* and *test equating* may be utilised to locate the learners on the same scale tested by different sets of tests in different regions over time.

3 Taxonomy of evaluation designs

What follows now outlines the various ways of classifying designs for evaluation.

31 Distinguishing forms of assessment

- **Formative – summative**
  The distinction between formative and summative forms of assessment is aptly illustrated by an example by Robert Stake (1976) who indicates that 'When the cook tastes the soup it is formative evaluation, and when the guest tastes the soup it is summative'. Which form should be used? The evaluation team for the Indian state of **Andhra Pradesh District Primary Education Programme (APDPEP)** recommended both types of evaluation. Other distinctions need to be considered. They are:

- **Formal – Informal**
  Formal evaluation is more operationalised and less personal. It must pass the tests of reliability, validity, credibility and utility.

- **Case Particular – Generalisation**
  Evaluation research may be done either to find the worth of the particular programme or the worth of the general approach.

- **Product – Process**
  A study of the *product* is expected to indicate the pay-off value while a study of the *process* is expected to indicate the intrinsic values of the programme. Both are needed, however, to find the worth of the programme.[1]

1 The other common dimensions that Stake (1976) mentions with regard to the classification of evaluation designs are: Descriptive – Judgmental; Preordinate – Responsive; Holistic – Analytic; Internal – External.

Classical Design for Impact Study

	Measurements	
Time	Project area	"Control" area
0	X_0	y_0
	Programme treatment	No Programme treatment
1	x_1	y_1
2	x_2	y_2
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•

$$(x_0 \cong y_0)$$

In the above scheme, x's and y's are any educational measurements. A valid estimate of programme impact at the end of time[2], say, will be

$$\text{Impact} = |x_2 - y_2| - |x_1 - y_1|$$

provided the two areas are exposed to the same exogenous factors.

4 Issues identified for assessment in the Andhra Pradesh District Primary Education Programme (APDPEP)

The key issues identified for assessing the impact of the **APDPEP** are:

- the state of capacity building for programme implementation
- levels of community participation
- the nature of equity focus
- the development of classroom processes
- the effectiveness of teacher training

If we want to investigate the effects of all these issues or factors simultaneously, a factorial design may be appropriate. To illustrate the simplest case, consider only two factors, namely, programme package and community participation on students' performance. Both factors are assumed to occur at two levels in the form of a presence or absence of the factor concerned. The four treatment combinations are shown below:

Students' mean score

	No programme package	Programme package implemented	Mean	Response to programme
Community participation (CP)	X	Z	(X + Z) / 2	Z - X
No or little CP	Y	W	(Y + W) / 2	W - Y
Mean	(X + Y) / 2	(Z + W) / 2		
Effect of CP	X - Y	Z - W		

4.1 Evaluating the accomplishments of a programme

Answers to the following questions provide the background against which the *accomplishments of a programme* may be evaluated.

- What are the specific changes being sought? What are the conditions in the programme area to which a programme must be adjusted if it is to attract the active support of the people?
- What are the channels of communication for the effective flow of education from project administrators to the people and for a flow of the attitudes and responses of the people to those responsible for the project?
- What are the barriers that must be overcome if the project is to achieve its objectives?

In effect, seeking answers to the questions raised indicates the potential research character of programme evaluation.

4.2 The development of an item bank for pupil assessment

- To start with, a number of tests may be constructed following anchor test design applicable to a particular level or class. Collected data will be analysed and items will be calibrated on a common scale. These items will be the initial deposit to the item bank.

- Similar item banks may be established for different classes or grades with common items between them. As a result, common scales may be framed for the entire target group (vertical equating).

- Any number of parallel tests may be constructed without further cost or delay. Moreover, *post facto* analysis of the test data and removal of poor items can avoid pretesting on every occasion.

- Maintenance of test security will also not be vitiated even if all the items are made known. This is because mastery of the items and mastery in the subject concerned are almost synonymous.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, Roy points out that programmes that engage the community in the actual intervention to improve education delivery are relatively new. While the participatory nature of **DPEP** has gained ground through the areas of intervention, this paper argues that there are nevertheless a number of limitations on *non-scientific* approaches when attempts are made to assess impact.

The author begins by drawing attention to the *hierarchy of objectives* of intervention programmes. He suggests that evaluators usually steer away from addressing the difficult issue of *impact* which may be caused by many factors which are quite distinct from programme activities, and he points to the difficulties of distinguishing between possible activities which could be responsible for influencing changes. The paper suggests various ways of controlling the investigation to enable the impact of project activities to be evaluated. It argues that there is a growing interest in the domain of project assessment in the *scientific evaluation* of such programmes. The paper concludes with a proposal of how impact can indeed be assessed.

2.3 Issues to consider when planning a baseline study

Tony Luxon
Institute for English Language Education
Lancaster University

This paper draws on the experiences of the Institute for English Language Education (IELE) at Lancaster University, which has been involved in the production of baseline studies for a variety of project types in a number of regions all over the world. The author, Tony Luxon, indicates that, throughout this time, the methodology and the philosophy of baseline research for projects in all types of social and educational contexts has evolved a great deal. The experiences of baseline studies involves a variety of ESP, including those with a focus on curriculum development, teacher and trainer training. The experiences have contributed to what the author considers to be essential issues which need to be considered each time a baseline activity is contemplated and regardless of where it is carried out.

The paper then begins with a consideration of issues pertaining to the project implementation team and their needs. What follows thereafter is a discussion of issues pertaining to the methodology of the research, with specific reference to the kinds of instrumentation needed and the types of data required. Finally, the author makes suggestions concerning the dissemination of the findings and recommendations of the research to various stakeholders.

1 Introduction

Over the past decade, the methodology and the philosophy of baseline research for projects in all types of social and educational contexts has evolved a great deal – although not to the point where there is an agreed model for baseline studies. The principle reason for there not being a single agreed-upon model is that because projects are context dependent, they are all different. They vary not only in their objectives and activities, according to scale of resources available and area of focus, but also in the social, cultural and educational environment in which they are carried out. Thus, what is appropriate for projects in countries of the former Soviet sphere of influence, might be inappropriate in, for example, the African continent, where there is a different educational tradition, and a different socio-economic organisation.

It would nevertheless be wrong to assume that nothing that is achieved in one context cannot allow us to learn lessons for other situations, or that the methodology for carrying out baseline studies in different contexts is completely different. Although there are differences, there are also inevitable commonalities. Baseline studies invariably give some form of 'snapshot' of the project environment before its activities are under way – and they usually have an evaluative and developmental function. Also, there is usually some form of survey of stakeholders and potential beneficiaries of the project.

A survey of baseline studies in which the IELE at Lancaster University has been involved shows this clearly, and, while a totally *reusable template* does not exist, there may well be issues which need to be considered each time an activity of this kind is undertaken. In the sections which follow, I suggest what some of these issues are and why they might be important for someone contemplating baseline research regardless of where it is carried out. How some of these issues are dealt with is still a matter for debate, but they at least need to be considered.

2 Issues pertaining to the needs of the project implementation team

Most of the baseline studies in which the IELE has been involved have been carried out by the project implementers. Whether this happens or not depends on the capacity of the project team. The issue here is whether the exercise will be one of capacity *identification* or capacity *building*. The following three issues deal with suggestions pertaining to the team carrying out the project.

In many of the projects in which IELE was involved in Eastern and central Europe, for example, the capacity in the area of ELT and linguistics was already very strong, as was the research tradition. Therefore, the main task was to find a combination of the most suitable people to constitute a project team. In these cases then, technically, there was no reason why the project implementers could not carry out the baseline study for their own project. The question of *insiders' disinterestedness* and *objectivity* towards the project environment is one which is regularly discussed in the literature of projects and project evaluation.

Even if we could agree on the parameters of *objectivity*, it cannot be automatically assumed that an outsider to the project is by definition more *objective* than an insider. As Alderson (1993) points out, outside evaluators bring their own agenda to the exercise, their own beliefs about evaluation, education and about the project environment. Outsiders may have to spend much of their time trying to understand the environment, and it is possible that their understanding will at best be partial and at worst wrong. Because of their outsider status, they may be less prone to influence from the variety of players connected with the project (although this cannot be assumed). At any stage of the exercise, when they do not have first hand knowledge of the project or the project environment, they may have to make decisions on whose judgement is reliable. They may well therefore be influenced precisely *because* of their 'outsiderness'.

Time is also an issue that impinges on decisions about whether the baseline study should be an insider- or outsider-led exercise. It might be difficult for an outsider, precisely because of time and money constraints, to stay within the project environment for two or three months. This needs to be borne in mind if it is agreed that the minimum time that it generally takes to carry out a baseline study for a large-scale three year project is approximately three months. If this were to be the case, then the cost of maintaining an outside consultant in the project environment could well be prohibitive.

In the case of projects in St Petersberg and Ukraine, for example, the baseline studies were very extensive reports with a wealth of data that could only have been carried out by a team of people with access to information about testing, classroom performance and interested stakeholders. It simply would not have been feasible for one or even two outside evaluators to have carried out this exercise in anything like this kind of breadth and depth.

- **Insider-led baseline studies**
  In the case of these insider-led baseline studies, Lancaster played a consultative and training role, as and when needed. As mentioned above, the capacity was already more than sufficient in these contexts, but there was a perceived need on the part of the

1 In the case of data analysis, for example, although none of the team had used SPSS, they were able to contract somebody in their institution to enter the data into the package and assist them with the analysis.

implementers themselves for consultancy in this particular kind of 'real-world' research. Although many of the team members had been involved in research prior to the project, they usually came to the project with no experience of working in a project or of the type of research experience such as, for example, classroom observation, instrument development or data analysis. Where it was possible to call on people in the host institutions for consultancy or training in any particular area, this was done[1].

- **Outsider-led baseline studies**

At this point it is worth considering the few examples of baseline studies which were not carried out by project implementers (or, at least, not entirely so). In the case of the Philippines, where the total management of the project, including policy, administration and budget was managed by Filipinos, a consultant from Lancaster carried out a very small-scale qualitative baseline study with the aim of determining needs and not for use as an evaluative instrument. It was felt that a 'new pair of eyes' introduced into the situation might reveal things which had not clearly been hitherto seen.

In Nicaragua, the baseline research was carried out by the British TCOs for the ODA funded **ELT Project** because it was not clear at the outset what type of project was needed (no research had as yet been undertaken). This also meant that there was no Nicaraguan implementation team. With no team, the only identified project implementers, the British TCOs, were required to do the research.[2]

- **Joint insider-outsider baseline studies**

In the case of a baseline study carried out in Cambodia, there were actually two reports. One was produced by the project team and was based on a qualitative exercise which focused on the activities in the schools, and the other, which concentrated on the project framework indicators of achievement, was produced by the outside consultant. Because the baseline study was seen as an important step in establishing ownership, it was important that it was not simply a case of the outsider consultant taking over the writing of the report with the assistance of the implementers. Furthermore, whereas the implementers neither regarded the project framework as very important nor felt that it would be particularly useful to them to base their report on the indicators, the project managers felt that the indicators might be important to the project sponsors. For this reason, the two reports were produced: one to do with evaluation and one to do with development and capacity-building.

This first consideration, that of who carries out the baseline study, is one of the most fundamental questions about which a decision needs to be made. Once it is made, other issues then become significant.

2 The situation was different at the end of the project when the impact assessment involved a team of 22 project implementers who had worked together throughout the project.

2.2 Ensure adequate time and resources for the exercise

The baseline study, if considered necessary, needs to be written into the project and have resources allotted to it. If this is not the case, then the team carrying out the exercise might run out of time, money and the stakeholders' patience. Research is often seen as *about* something rather than being an integral *part* of that something.

2.3 Consider what the project team might need in order to carry out the baseline study

It is necessary to give consideration to the type of training that might be necessary for participants involved in conducting a baseline study. At this stage, the kind of communication system necessary to link members of the team is also an important consideration, especially if they do not belong to the same institution. For example, it may be necessary, as was the case with the project in Ukraine, to facilitate communication between cities in different parts of the country by e-mail. Assistance from the British Council was sought to facilitate the introduction of this mode of communication. It was also necessary to meet periodically (it is crucial to make sure that such meetings are arranged and funded at the outset of the research).

3 Methodological considerations

The following seven suggestions pertain to the way in which baseline research is approached. They refer to methodological issues such as the development of instruments and the types of data that baseline studies should seek to capture.

3.1 Be aware of both evaluation *and* development issues. Take advantage of the capacity building/identification and communications opportunities which arise through the process.

If the project implementers themselves are to carry out the baseline study, then this is an extremely valuable opportunity to develop capacity for the ensuing project. Indeed, it is here argued that the baseline research process should be seen as the first activity in the implementation of the project rather than as a pre-project exercise.

It might be the case that project members do not know each other well. Training seminars and workshops, cooperative working on research and the writing of the report are all opportunities for team building. Training sessions give the first opportunities to see how well, or badly, teams work together.

If the baseline study is treated as a mini-project in itself, then there are valuable project or innovation skills to be learned from carrying it out. Team members may well be professional academics in ELT and Applied Linguistics, but it cannot be assumed that they have the necessary skills to deal with other agendas. Buchanan and Boddy (1992: 28), refer to three agendas in an innovation context: the *content, control* and *process* agendas. These can be described as follows:

- **The content agenda:**
  The project manager is expected to be technically competent and experienced with respect to the substance of the changes being implemented. Thus, for example, he is expected to be competent with the hardware and software of a networked management information system.

- **The control agenda:**
  The project manager is expected to be familiar and competent with a range of planning, scheduling, budgeting, resourcing and monitoring techniques, with setting and meeting deadlines and targets – the staple fare of project management courses.

- **The process agenda:**
  The project manager is expected to be competent in communications and consultation, in team building, in influencing and negotiating skills and in the management of enthusiasm and resistance.

If project team members have not had to deal with these different agendas before, they almost certainly will have to during the research process. Whatever they gain from this process may then be transferable to the rest of their work in the project.

In the Cambodia baseline study referred to above, the team which carried out the research was the actual inspection team for ELT. Their duties during and after the project were to visit schools, talk to teachers, students and school principals, observe classes and look at test results. All these activities were included in the baseline research, and so, as well as being a valuable piece of research, the team also went through a process from which they could learn a great deal about their future responsibilities.

Similarly, in the report produced after the Ukraine **INSETT** baseline study, the team members referred to what they had gained through the process:

The challenge to the team

For the majority of team members this was the first experience of research work of this nature, involving the close study of situations and attitudes in the real world. While the team acknowledges mistakes were made due to lack of experience, we can identify several gains made as a result of work on this study:

- All members of the team have gained experience in a mode of research which is very new to Ukraine, namely research which is centred around professional practices and carried out by practitioners.
- Team members have a clearer grasp of the issues surrounding approaches to ELT.
- Team members have become familiar with a method of observing lessons which allows the observer to assess all aspects of a lesson in much more detail than traditional observation techniques allow.
- The groups of secondary stakeholders who are rarely, if ever, consulted have been given the opportunity to consider some of the issues surrounding ELT and to express their own views on the current state of ELT in Ukrainian schools.
- Secondary stakeholders have been made aware of the possibility of change.

Source: Baseline Study Report, Ukraine INSETT Project: 1998

The baseline study, both through the process and its product, can be an important means of establishing credibility with the project beneficiaries and the stakeholders. As mentioned previously, the **Nicaraguan ELT project** baseline study was carried out by the British project coordinators, principally because there was not, at the time, a locally-based project team. The research process enabled the coordinators to meet teachers throughout the country and to familiarise themselves with the ELT situation in schools throughout the regions. They also met most of the stakeholders of the project during this process. They found that this provided an invaluable opportunity for making themselves known to all involved. In fact, the research was valuable because it uncovered many relevant issues pertaining to ELT in Nicaragua. This happened because the project was the first national ELT research investigation undertaken in the country after a period in which English had been, in the words of the Director of Education, 'abandoned'. This made it possible to say things about ELT which were not mere assertions and also to provide the rationale for project activities from then on. It is fair to say that, without the baseline study, it would have been much more difficult to carry out the activities of the project.

In all these instances, the opportunities for establishing communication, for team building, capacity identification/building and the opportunity to establish the credibility of the project implementers would have been lost had the baseline study been carried out by an evaluator who had not been part of the project. As Weir and Roberts (1994:218) point out:

> *While we know that the collection and analysis of data should meet the standards of feasibility and accuracy, we have also learnt that positive interpersonal and institutional relationships must underpin technical adequacy, and are at the heart of effective evaluation: this is because relationships of commitment and trust enable the involvement of players in the evaluation process, and the utilisation of findings. We have learnt that the importance of these relationships must be taken into account from the very outset.*

3.2 The scale and scope of the baseline study should be appropriate for the scale and scope of the project

Although it is difficult to estimate, three months may be considered to be the average length of time during which a large-scale project is likely to spend on a baseline study. If we are considering the implementation of a project with a lifespan of three years, this will account for less than ten percent of the project time. In view of the developmental value of the process and its influence on the future activities of the project, this is not excessive.[3]

3.3 If possible, collect both qualitative and quantitative data

Often stakeholders prefer quantitative data because of its potential to account for things in a *countable* way. However, not everything is quantifiable. Nor is it possible to gain an in-depth understanding of a situation without also using qualitative methods of data collection. If both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed, a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of a situation is possible.

There are nevertheless aspects that can be counted, as, for example, the number of teachers trained through a teacher training project, or the number of books distributed through a textbook/materials writing project. And such methods are useful for calculating differences in examination results.

Changes in teachers' attitudes and behaviours are more difficult to quantify as are predicated on the types of interaction in a classroom. It is possible to quantify the quality of experience in some ways if one uses custom-made instruments. This means that the quantifying classroom behaviour can tell a story as vividly as a prose description. There are many benefits to processing qualitative data in a way that permits it to become *countable*. The IELE attempted this in the Nicaraguan baseline study. Instruments were developed specifically for the project. This enabled data from

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3 It is recognised that projects differ in scale and this rightly should affect how much time and effort is spent on baseline research.

classroom observations to be quantified in terms of, for example, teacher talking time, the amount of Spanish used in relation to the amount of English used in class, the kinds of interactions which took place between teachers and students, and between students and students.

These results were then compared with the data of teacher interviews which were more qualitative in nature and were concerned with *why* they taught the way they did rather than *what* they did when they taught. It may be argued that qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis do not *look* at the same kind of thing and so 'true' triangulation is not possible. This may be so. Nevertheless, the sheer accumulation of complementary qualitative and quantitative data makes for a comprehensive and, for many, a convincing picture of what is happening.

3.4 Collect data from a variety of sources so as to allow for a variety of perspectives

The issue of triangulation of data has been given much attention in the literature on project evaluation. Triangulation helps to counteract the Rashomon effect, as Fanselow (1987) calls it: which is the effect of a variety of perceptions. There are clear epistemological implications in research of this nature, but data collection from a variety of sources seems, to me, to be the most logical way to deal with the issues regardless of one's perspective. It is possible to take a non-realist, relativist point of view, and yet accept that as long as perceptions are recognised as such, what is reported may be considered to be valid. Likewise, a critical realist might believe that the truth is out there, and regard a multi-faceted approach as one of the best ways of gaining access to it. However, as there are so many stakeholders with varying views of the project environment, it is necessary to report their perceptions as a matter of record.

3.5 Consider which data already exist in documented form and which data need to be collected by using instruments

The kind of data which need to be collected may already be available in one form or another. It is therefore unwise to attempt to re-invent the wheel. A useful beginning would be to try to survey relevant reports carried out by international organisations, such as UNICEF and UNESCO, or local government organisations and NGOs. Certainly statistical information, which might be obtained through the ministry of education and triangulated with other sources, can be used as valuable contextual data. If the information has been collected through a reputable agency, this has the added advantage of increasing the credibility of the report.

Documentation which relates to the curriculum, or to teaching and learning philosophies, for example, may already exist. Even if the documentation is not as accurate or as comprehensive as it might be, this is in itself useful to know.

Data on what happens in classrooms will probably need to be collected by visits and observations, and instrumentation may be developed to collect this data. It is possible that other research may have already collected relevant classroom data and, if this is so, it may be usefully incorporated into the study. However, there is no real substitute for the team going out and investigating the situation themselves!

3.6 Whatever the type of project, always visit the classroom

This suggestion may seem to recommend what is blindingly obvious, but it is an issue that is often overlooked. Very often baseline data consist of quantitative data on book distribution, for example, but they might not give any idea as to how the book is used in class by teachers and students, something which it is vital to know if the supply of books is to prove effective in the classroom. Similarly, while it is important to know about desertion rates, it is also useful to know *how* students react to what they are learning in the class as this may be a factor which contributes to desertion rates.

Whether the project implementers be *insiders* to the target situation or *outsiders*, only visits to the classroom will enable them to gain an understanding about what happens in the teaching-learning situation. It may well be the case that project members are or have been teachers themselves, but it is surprising what they may discover about how much they *do not* know.

3.7 Consider the possible uses and audiences there might be for the baseline study, and allow for new uses discovered through the process.

It is important to realise that the results of the baseline study may be read in a variety of forms by different audiences and may also be used in ways that were not envisaged at the outset. The Nicaragua baseline report was used in the following ways:

- It was used as reference material for the Ministry of Education and the universities which, until that time, had done no formal research into ELT. It was also used as a reference for anybody else, Nicaraguan or foreign, who wished to carry out research into ELT in the future. A number of researchers from North America used the baseline study for their own research, as did four Nicaraguan project members, who wrote dissertations on ELT in Nicaragua. The baseline was therefore a major stimulus to much needed further research.

- It was used as a briefing document for consultancy and ODA monitoring visits. Having this kind of information available made these visits more effective in a shorter time. Other aid organisations working in ELT and in the secondary and tertiary systems in general also used the baseline study to inform their own work.

- It was used as an aid to the overseas training institution in order to provide appropriate training for project trainers. Overseas training is not always appropriate to the local situation. The baseline study, along with visits from the UK training institution, helped to make the training relevant and appropriate.

- As mentioned earlier, the baseline report was used as the basis for the diffusion process. It enabled the dissemination information about the project to as many teachers, directors and officials as possible. It also contributed to the establishment of an ELT communication network.

4 Dissemination of the findings and recommendations

The baseline report offers benefits to many of the stakeholders. For this reason, the findings of the study should be transmitted to its many audiences in appropriate ways. The following are suggestions of ways to enable this:

41 Allow for a variety of channels through which the findings of the baseline study might be transmitted to its audiences.

It may be argued that all stakeholders and beneficiaries should have equal access to the report and that decisions taken by the producers of the report or any other concerned stakeholder could disempower those who cannot take those decisions. I would hold this as a valid theoretical position, but would want to say that reality must intervene at some point. Depending on how wide a target grouping of beneficiaries is, it is not likely that so many would actively want to read such a report. Furthermore, the distribution of such a report among, for example, 5000 teachers, would be prohibitive in terms of cost and logistics.

Copies could be made available in resource centres (if they exist) or at regional ministry offices, if they are ever visited by teachers. The report should be made available as widely as possible but I would suggest that it is not realistic to expect that many people will actually want to read a lengthy report, which is unlikely to reflect the kind of information that automatically grips one's attention on every single page.

Who should receive a copy is not necessarily a question of power, but rather of real accessibility. It may have more to do with the preference for quicker and more striking ways of reading the results. Although it may be necessary for a certain type of audience (academics for example) to see the whole report, this is not necessarily the case with all audiences. In Nicaragua, a shorter, more graphic report was produced for people who did not want to, or have the time to, read the report in full. However, had anyone wished to read the complete report, it could easily have been made available. The shorter report was more easily accessible and, because of its graphic nature, the results were more clearly shown. Policy makers and other beneficiaries who were concerned with the central findings, but not with the details of the main report, seemed to prefer this report.

4.2 Keep stakeholders and target groups as informed as possible throughout the process so that they know what kind of report to expect

If, as indicated above, it takes on average three months for the research on a national scale to be carried out, and then another relatively lengthy period while drafts are written and findings are discussed. In the duration, it is important for stakeholders and beneficiaries to know what kind of report is being produced and what will be covered in it. Our experience suggests that there should not be any great surprises in the report, and that people need to be given a chance to add their contributions to the report before it is finally produced. An interim report can be of immense value in encouraging input from stakeholders.

5 Conclusion

Finally, it must be stated that all of the above issues have been addressed by others in one form or another in baseline study exercises in various parts of the world, and in studies undertaken in diverse social and educational conditions. It is certainly not the contention here that this paper presents a universal set of measures for dealing with these issues in any conditions. Projects are of necessity context-sensitive – as should be the research on which projects are based. It is suggested rather that these issues will need to be addressed by those who carry out project baseline research. What needs to be considered afresh in each baseline study is *Who should be involved?* and *What is the most appropriate approach for proceeding in this context?* I would argue that if this initial process can be successfully dealt with, then the possibilities for the success of the ensuing project are increased enormously. It is well worth putting effort into the baseline study. It is, after all, the first step on the journey of a thousand miles.

3

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

3.1 Identifying stakeholders

Dermot F. Murphy and Pauline Rea-Dickins

3.2 Considering the audience – an important phase in project evaluations

Dermot F Murphy and Clara Inés Rubiano

31 Identifying stakeholders

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This paper focuses on how important it is for evaluators to identify stakeholder groupings if they want to make effective use of participatory evaluations in educational development projects. It argues that it is necessary to pay detailed attention both to *identification* of stakeholder groupings and to *understanding* their relationships to projects in question.

The authors provide a detailed exposition of the variety of ways in which the concept *stakeholder* may be defined. Moreover, they argue that these definitions generally pertain either to individuals/groups who are involved in or who are affected by a project or its evaluation, or to the differing interests of these individuals/groups. The authors argue that stakeholder interests are not usually rigorously defined. They indicate that stakeholder interests do not seem to offer the kind of insights that might guide the planning and management of participatory or stakeholder evaluation. This lacunae, they argue, suggests the need to identify more robust parameters for exploring stakeholder perspectives on evaluation.

Accordingly, the paper begins with the authors' undertaking an interrogation of the multiplicity of definitions of *stakeholder*. This is followed by their examination of the inherent power relations and power differences which, they indicate, provides a framework for exploring the nature of the roles and relationship of stakeholders in an evaluation. The authors then suggest three propositions about stakeholder perspectives, which they support by using data they have obtained from their research into the stakeholder problem. Their paper concludes by suggesting some of the implications that their findings might have for practice.

1 Introduction

It is essential for those who wish to make effective use of participatory evaluation in educational development projects to identify stakeholder groups and to understand their relationships with one another and to the project. There are various ways of defining the concept *stakeholder* and many of these refer to individuals or members of groups involved in or affected by a project or evaluation. These definitions usually centre on the differing interests which distinguish groups – an approach which, we argue, does not offer the information needed for guiding the planning and management of participatory or stakeholder evaluations.

Our experience of conducting evaluations, both as external evaluators and consultants in participatory evaluations, suggests the need to identify more robust parameters for exploring stakeholder perspectives on evaluation. In the next section we shall examine definitions of *stakeholder* before we look at power relations and before suggesting three propositions about stakeholder perspectives. In section 4 we shall explore stakeholder perspectives by looking at data from questionnaires, interviews and field notes and we shall try to establish the extent to which there is support for the proposed framework. In section 5 we will attempt to show the implications of our findings for practice.

2 Definitions of *stakeholder*

The notion of participatory evaluation in education is not a new one. Norris (1990:131) indicates that in his original conception of evaluation, Tyler regarded evaluations as a tool to help the teacher in planning the curriculum and making instructional decisions. In the same place Norris adds that Tyler and Waples advocated the study of classroom problems by teachers and supervisors as early as 1930 – thus showing that both these authors believed in the usefulness of participatory evaluations nearly seventy years ago.

More recent discussions of *stakeholder evaluation* tend also to talk about the need to respond to the interests of *real people* and the irrelevance or even failure of other approaches to evaluation (Weiss 1986). The aim of a stakeholder evaluation is to make evaluations fairer and more useful, usually by getting primary stakeholders – the *real people* who may benefit from and/or implement the project – involved in conducting the evaluation of the project, in line with the proposal just cited.

These proposals are often criticised because some advocates of stakeholder evaluation blur distinctions between, for example, *accountability* and *knowledge evaluation*, and a few make the disputable claim that stakeholder evaluation is a sufficient approach to evaluation – with the implication that no other is needed (Chelimsky 1997:22). It is unclear whether these proposals reduce privilege or pass it to different stakeholders in a participatory evaluation. In any case, this usage of the concept of *stakeholder evaluation* is misleading since *all* evaluations are

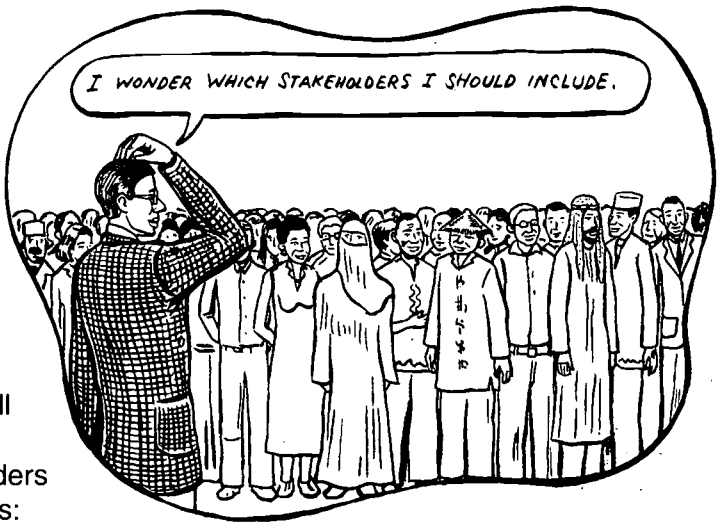
conducted by or for stakeholders. The question is rather *Which particular groups of stakeholders commission, use or do evaluation?* It is recognised that no one seems to propose that all possible categories of stakeholders should participate.

2.1 Ways of identifying stakeholders

Stakeholders are frequently identified by their working role within a programme, or by their contribution to the programme. In such a case, the term *stakeholder* may refer to either individuals or groups. When stakeholders are defined by their working role within a programme, the definition is usually unclear about whether the definition is specifically to do with their place in the project or whether this classification refers only to their association with the evaluation.

For example, Rossi and Freeman (1993:408; Weiss 1986:151) refer to the following in their list of stakeholders:

> *Policy-makers and decision-makers ... Program sponsors ... Evaluation sponsors ... Target participants ... Program management ... Program staff ... Evaluators ... Program competitors ... Contextual stakeholders ... Evaluation community ....*



This list is not exhaustive and identifies groups which, while they may not always be involved in carrying out the evaluation, are *potential audiences* for the findings. A similar categorisation by Aspinwall et al (1992:84-85) tries to simplify the matter of classifying stakeholders by proposing four broad groupings:

Clients or customers	Those who are intended to benefit from the project
Suppliers	Those who implement or provide resources for the project
Competitors or collaborators	Usually other organisations
Regulators	Any agency which directly or indirectly regulates the project

The categorisation of Aspinwall *et al* has the advantage of not being an open-ended list, as is the one previously referred to. One could easily add to their list. We wish, however, to argue that the four categories of Aspinwall et al are not sufficiently distinct and consequently of little use. For example, some participants, such as teachers in an educational development project, fall into the categories of both *client* and *supplier*. There is, moreover little discussion about how the categorisation is arrived at, and it is not evident from such a list why and how each group will take a particular attitude or set of attitudes to an evaluation.

Rossi and Freeman (1993:409) also focus on the multiplicity of stakeholder groupings. They point out that as a consequence of the multiplicity of stakeholder groups, evaluators may be unsure whose perspective they should take in designing an evaluation. This dilemma is interpreted by Hopkins (1989) as pointing to different groupings within the group of evaluators. He draws attention to the divided loyalties of evaluators who have to take the concerns of multiple stakeholders into account. They may (variously) be loyal to the:

Profession	Rossi and Freeman's evaluation community
Sponsor	Rossi and Freeman's sponsors
Community	Rossi and Freeman's target participants (The evaluator acts as advocate and these stakeholders are not actively involved.)

If one looks closely at each of the above classifications, it is immediately apparent that one could go on subdividing each of the groupings – since even stakeholders may also have divided loyalties.

The following classification, elucidated by Guba and Lincoln (1989:40-41), takes the relationship between any stakeholder and the evaluation as the defining parameter. They then identify the following three broad groupings:

Agents	those who conduct and use the evaluation
Beneficiaries	those who gain from use of the evaluation
Victims	those who are negatively affected by the evaluation

As with each of the aforementioned classifications, various subcategories within each of the three main classes may also identified. This clearly locates each member's or group's stake as being part of the evaluation whereas the other categorisations were potentially indeterminate between their stake in the *project* and their stake in the *evaluation*. Again, however, when we apply the categories to familiar cases, some members seem to fall into two categories. There is a further difficulty that Guba and Lincoln (1989:202) acknowledge, the difficulty of identifying victims. We suggest that it would also be difficult to predict which of the second and third categories stakeholders would fall into: our goal for a more comprehensive framework requires some predictive power.

It is common, then, to acknowledge that there are different categories of stakeholder, and that each category has its own interests and spheres of action. This notion, however, remains on the level of generality and is a taxonomy. We suggest that, just as Linnæen taxonomies are revealed by plant genetics to misclassify species, a study of underlying factors in groups may reveal more about their workings. At this juncture, we feel that the most useful pointer is to recognise that the defining interest is the *stake* in the evaluation. Categorisation as a defining procedure is more or less observable, but this has little or no explanatory value when one tries to account for different stakeholder perspectives. We suggest that a more effective explanatory procedure is still needed.

3 Defining stakeholder perspectives

As we have shown in the previous sections, stakeholders may be classified as belonging to different groups, a small, select number of which, in the field of evaluation, have traditionally been involved in conducting evaluations. In order to extend involvement in evaluation (and thereby incidentally expanding the kinds of evaluation that may be undertaken), it might be useful to expand on the stakeholders' understanding of the evaluation process. The following is a comment by a stakeholder (practitioner) who is not traditionally involved in project evaluation (except as a more or less willing subject)[1]. His perception is that 'evaluations are done for the funding body by ex-patriate visitors'.

This view resonates what Rossi and Freeman (1993:252) term a *connoisseur evaluation*, i.e. an evaluation done by an outsider who is a subject specialist not trained in evaluation – what they call 'among the shakiest of all impact assessment techniques'. In this case, a practitioner would be looking for power, the power to do and be involved in evaluation of his/her project.

31 Power as a variable in defining stakeholders

Power as an element of evaluation and the activity surrounding evaluation seems to have aroused curiously little attention if one accepts that evaluation and its utilisation are about the exercise of power: evaluations

1 This perception of the situation appears to be limited since there is a lot of evidence to counter such a rosy interpretation of the scene – through talking to senior figures rather than practitioners (Mthembu 1996).

decide about the continuation or curtailment of a project and about the future direction of a project. We draw on the following definition of *power*.

> *Power is the ability of individuals, or the members of a group, to achieve aims or further the interests they hold ... How much power an individual or group is able to achieve governs how far they are able to put their wishes into practice at the expense of those of others* (Giddens 1989:729).

Following Giddens, power (a basic sociological concept) refers to relations within and between groups, between individuals. We would add that, when applied to the process of evaluation, power is structurally created and allocated.

3.2 Knowledge as a variable in defining stakeholder

It is pertinent at this point to draw attention to the relationship between knowledge and power. Power is dependent on knowledge. In some views, the level of this dependence, for certain modalities of power, is currently greater than ever before (Fairclough 1989). Evaluation, on the other hand, is about generating knowledge, whether general or specific, and, as such, has its own power. This power is greatest where the findings or knowledge derived from evaluation offer clear guidance to specific stakeholders about future action or where *information for prediction is information for control* – not forgetting, however, that some information/knowledge is not useful or is rejected by those in power (Patton 1997:348-350). The relationship between knowledge and power suggests why those who hold power may tend to resist the process of evaluation activities: change in the conduct of the evaluation may lead to the restructuring of power within or between organisations.

If the exercise of power is about furthering group or individual interests, and stakeholder groups can be defined by interest, then it appears to be worthwhile to explore interest and power relations as parameters if one wishes to understand stakeholder relations and perspectives. This definition of power makes it clear that power may be relative and may depend on the ability of stakeholders to control the actions of others – regardless of whether the ability to control is ascribed or achieved. It is this experience of power that may also underlie the sense of disempowerment evident in the rejection of outsider evaluation cited above.

3.3 Knowledge, power and interest as variables in defining stakeholders

The exploratory nature of this work will become evident in the discussion that follows, particularly as it becomes increasingly evident that both *interest* and *power* are perhaps more complex than might *prima facie* appear to be the case. In an early stage of our empirical investigation into the notion that an understanding of power relations might illuminate stakeholder perspectives in evaluation, we considered a number of potential areas where relative power and different interests might come into play. These are:

Knowledge	About the project and about project evaluation
Expertise	Relevant to the project and to evaluation
Control	Power to initiate or stop action and participation
Budget control	Power to take decisions about spending
Responsibility	Recognition of the individual's/group's power and its potential to affect others
Benefits	As symbols of individual power and as potential to advance (an increase in one's own knowledge and skills, for example)
Loyalty	Individuals may have more than one loyalty, but the direction of loyalty may change (as when, for example, one becomes integrated into a team). Loyalty in groups also has the potential to influence outcomes.
Status	Position within a hierarchy, or origin of a group or an individual
Distance	Degree of acceptance of another's right to take decisions or benefit personally

We also arrived at three propositions about stakeholder perspectives which we proposed to *test* as we examined data:

1. Stakeholder perspectives defined by power relations offer more insights into evaluations than definitions based on job or position.
2. Stakeholder perspectives defined by power relations will have greater explanatory potential than considerations of cross-cultural differences when examining and understanding reactions to evaluation or an evaluation.
3. Understanding stakeholder perspectives will enable us to plan and organise evaluations more effectively, and to promote a greater and better use of their findings.

The first proposition should be self-evident in the light of the preceding discussion. The second proposition is relevant in development, and derives from an earlier study suggesting that the existence of an evaluation culture reveals more about the utilisation of evaluation than attempts to explain utilisation through cross-cultural difference (Murphy 1997). The third proposition follows from the first two and would therefore be true for any approach.

Our data come from an as yet small number of interviews and questionnaire responses from representatives of different stakeholder groups, which include funding agencies, evaluators, project managers and teachers. Other data used come from project reports and field notes of our own, and these were used in deriving the above list of areas. For reasons of space we will not give any more details about the design of the survey. Also, the categories considered here do not include all those which have been previously listed because we do not have adequate data to justify those which have been omitted.

4.1 Knowledge about the project or the evaluation is expressed in a number of ways.

> *You need workshops to get people involved and so they can understand.*

This quote from an evaluation contractor identifies professional knowledge as a precondition for getting stakeholders involved, that is, being able to exercise power. It is an interest of the contractor to get this to happen and the contractor's belief is that it will promote ownership and favour project sustainability. The simultaneous passing on of control and responsibility is not perceived as a threat, a point which seems to support Guba and Lincoln's (1989:267) idea that power is not to be shared out in a restructuring that aims to empower, but grown (new power is created).

> *The consultative nature of the partnership made acceptance of evaluation by local stakeholders easier .*

This remark by a project stakeholder after an evaluation suggests that open communication about knowledge where the stakeholders are information users (cf. Patton 1997) means that the latter are more likely to use their power to utilise the evaluation. Their power, in addition, has been acknowledged. The following remark from the contractor supports this line of procedure, presumably because the expectation is that it responds to the interests of more stakeholders and encourages them to use their power:

> *I'd like all parties to understand the nature of evaluation, to have seen the TORs, to have had a hand in drawing them up, know who its for, what's to be done, what the implications are. It should be an open relationship .*

Such comments beg the further question as to the nature of the consultation, involvement and partnership. To what extent is this realised through mere information exchange? To what extent are the participants in an evaluation actually enfranchised or empowered by the process? To what extent are they in a position to influence events at the various stages of an evaluation process? This in turn raises questions about the nature of *expertise.*

4.2 Expertise includes dimensions of learning and understanding, and these issues were raised by several respondents.

> *PE [Partnership Evaluation] is meant to be a positive experience for both sides, and a learning experience .*

Everyone involved should be learning, because there is shared ownership ...

There is a trade off between learning to evaluate and quality of conclusions .

Each group learned from the other .

How about building in some kind of attachment that will allow the Fifo [fly-in fly-out evaluator] to work with/train personnel ?

These observations from three stakeholder groups – contractor, evaluation manager, evaluation participant – reinforce the perception that *learning to evaluate* is important and that it empowers those who learn (Kiely *et al* 1995, Murphy 1996). Comment (3) – from an evaluator contractually engaged in carrying out an evaluation – introduces the inevitable tension between the *learning* process on the one hand and the dimension of *accountability* on the other.

At this point, we may ask, *At the end of the day, which is more important: the learning or the integrity and quality of the evaluation findings and report?* These are not easy questions to answer and clearly concern different stakeholder interests. Nonetheless, if we find ourselves working in a climate of partnership evaluations, then greater clarity about our own accountability relationships (as evaluators) with a funding agency and/or with the project community is required. This clarity is crucial for all stakeholders involved, since different interests need to be identified and satisfied.

4.3 Consideration of issues of control

Consideration of control raises questions about the conditions that would need to be in place in order for some balance of control to operate amongst the participants in an evaluation.

The period of serious work by locals should be included in their annual work targets.

Time is a constraint. School time is strictly for teaching and little is spent on evaluation of projects.

The points raised here are expressed as concern with time and they link with issues about levels of responsibility, extent of involvement and, presumably, ownership. In our terms, the issue here is about power – the power to act – because, at present, someone else's power to oblige these people to do other things apparently precludes their involvement in evaluation.

4.4 Consideration of status

Status is defined here in terms of an individual's position in a hierarchy – project, ministry or institution. The comments we gathered were very much to do with evaluators' status and mode of operating, in other words, how they exercise their power:

At one end of the scale there were evaluators who were a bit dictatorial while at the other end there were those who were empathetic .

This, of course, suggests the need to consider power style because this respondent is referring to experience in one project with different evaluators.

With reference to *experienced* and *more senior teachers* the following was mentioned:

Lots can be improved, tapped from focused discussions.

The evaluator should, in fact, get these teachers to reflect on what they have been doing and to evaluate themselves.

There is a strain created so it becomes a one-way discussion thereafter .

I would recommend that evaluation findings be effected in a way that will be beneficial to the project ...

What emerges from these data is that, unsurprisingly, there are differences of interest between the stakeholder groups and, again, a perception of those with higher status using their power in ways which are not accepted. These respondents, in other words, do not accept the implied power distance.

In terms of project management and promoting dialogue within an evaluation framework, it would appear there are indications here that insights can be gained from gathering information about the different prevailing interests and power relations in order to understand the stakeholders' various perspectives. Alongside the differences there are themes of concern to more than one target group. These are tentative conclusions as much more work needs to be done to develop critical examination of the three propositions. Interestingly, however, the majority of issues raised in our data so far do have implications for the ways in which evaluations, in particular partnership evaluations, are managed. We now conclude with some of these implications.

5 Implications for managing evaluation

The ideas we list here are not new, and have appeared before in discussions of the principles of educational management and of managing evaluation (e.g. Aspinwall *et al* 1992, Everard & Morris 1996). The only value we would claim for revisiting them afresh while doing participatory evaluations is just that they come with new empirical support. We suggest that evaluators planning to do participatory research should:

- plan for open communication.
- define what partnership evaluation is to mean in the context.
- put power/responsibility at the level where decisions will be most effectively taken.
- resource time to learn to evaluate and to participate in evaluations.

To this list we propose tentatively to add that evaluators should:

- identify stakeholder interests.
- identify power relations between stakeholder groups.

3.2 Considering the audience – an important phase in project evaluations

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This paper refers to an aspect of evaluations that often tends to be glossed over in the evaluation process – the *audience* of the evaluation. The paper emphasises how important it is for evaluators to give consideration to the audience or audiences for whom the evaluation is intended. The authors interrogate the complexities associated with notions of the *audience* and argue that differing interests and differing statuses as well as differing power relations are inherent to the conception of *audience*. For this reason, the paper argues that the identification of, and consideration for, the audience/s is central to notions of practical utility of an evaluation and to the compilation of evaluation reports.

The authors argue that the evaluation of any project involves people with differing roles and people who make different contributions. These differences imply differences in status, interests and in the power to act on or control what is done in the project, what is done in the evaluation, what is contained in the evaluation report and what recommendations are implemented.

By way of contextualising their argument, the authors draw on critical incidences pertaining to the audience/s which are manifested in the evaluation of the **Colombian Framework for English (COFE) project**, an INSET programme involving twenty-six universities and implying numerous inherent audiences.

Finally, the paper concludes with suggestions on how to approach an evaluation by taking the reality of *audience/s* into account.

1 The complex nature of the audience/s

Project impact evaluations take place in a variety of specific settings such as an organisation or community. In an organisation, the evaluation may be as small as a single class of students or it may be significantly larger and involve a grouping of universities at a national level. Similarly, in communities, evaluations may measure the impact of a project on, for example, a small group of women. Or, on a more complex level, evaluations may involve an investigation which resembles a national census in all its complexity and with all its accompanying participants. What is common to evaluations is that all involve people who have different roles in the project or programme in question.

The broad-ranging differences among participants may raise questions like: *For whom is the evaluation?* and *Who wants it?* There is presumably someone who is commissioning or requesting the evaluation. This furthermore begs the question: *Whose interests are furthered by the evaluation?*

- Funders will want to know if project goals have been achieved and to what extent the project represented *value for money*.
- Project planners may want to know how well their ideas translated into action, and what adjustments should be made.
- Teachers, who have developed teaching material, will want to know how appropriate the project materials really are.
- Students will want to know how well they performed prior to a project, and to what extent their performance improved as a result of the intervention.

What are accepted ways of identifying and serving these different groups?

In order to attempt to answer this, we shall briefly describe specific project evaluations which highlighted questions pertaining to the audience/s and their attendant methodologies. An attempt will be made to explore ways of dealing with different groups or audiences in evaluating projects, and then to indicate how the notion of audience was dealt with (or could have been dealt with) at different stages of the evaluation.

2 The context of this paper

The **Colombian Framework for English (COFE)** project ran for five years as a bilateral project which aimed to update the English language teaching programmes for teachers. The project focused on both initial and in-service training for teachers of English in Colombia, South America. It involved twenty-six universities, and built in a component of training in Britain for almost all members of staff from the participating institutions. In addition, **COFE** conducted several seminars and training workshops and arranged teacher exchanges within Colombia. Seventeen resource centres were set up across the country to support the project and the teaching of English in general.

The **COFE** project was subjected to three evaluations in the course of the project's lifespan. The first evaluation of the project was undertaken by the Ministry of Education in 1994. The second, in 1995, was undertaken by the then

ODA, and the third, by the Ministry of Education in 1996. Generally, the participants in the institutions tended to equate evaluations with *supervision* or *inspection*. Ministries, as was the case in the **COFE** project, tended to conceptualise evaluation narrowly as measurement of outputs against stated goals and tended not to give much consideration to the qualitative spin-offs of the project.

After an introductory training course which was designed to teach project players why and how to carry out an evaluation, this perception seemed to change. All the UK-trained lecturers received some basic training in carrying out evaluations, and one group, in 1994, initiated a small-scale evaluation in five universities (see Murphy 1994). Thereafter, in 1996, the final year of the project, an *insider* evaluation was undertaken by project participants. This evaluation was intended to assess the impact of the **COFE** on participating universities.

The group completed its work in 1997 and prepared various audience-specific reports for DFID, the Colombian Association of Universities (ASCUN), the Ministry of Education and also for the participating universities. This meant that, in its first, large-scale evaluation, the evaluation team had to deal with a variety of different audiences.

3 The notion of audience

When we consider how little attention the concept of *audience* receives, it would appear that the idea of *audience* in project evaluations is either taken for granted or (for most of the time) is relegated to the realm of the insignificant.

Audiences, it seems, are often identified with stakeholders (see Murphy & Rea-Dickins in this volume). In such cases, the range may include students in a class, their teachers, project planners, funders, university authorities, ministries (in two countries in an international project), employers, and even the tax-payers whose taxes pay for the project. One or more grouping from this list may be identified as the audience/s, and as *the people* who should receive the findings of the evaluation in the report prepared by the evaluators (Lynch 1996:3). In spite of such an assumption, there does not appear to be any grounded categories for what constitutes an audience or who should be assigned the status of an audience grouping. In fact, as Freeman and Rossi (1993:408) point out, very little is known about how evaluation audiences are formed, identified or activated.

A very general and fairly frequently used form of categorisation distinguishes between *primary* and *secondary* audiences (Sanders 1997:398).

Although the *primary audience* includes teachers and other project staff, as well as students. Sanders (1997:398) points out that there are few examples of students actually receiving evaluation reports.

The *secondary audience* includes administrative staff, other teachers who are not involved in the project, and, in Sanders's view, at least the sponsors or funding body. The sponsors or funding body are in fact the audience most likely to commission evaluation, while teachers may constitute the audience who are most likely to be affected by the project.

Once an audience has been identified, or has identified itself by commissioning the evaluation, consultation with the audience should determine the goals of the evaluation (Lynch 1996:3). Obviously, different audiences are likely to have different goals and interests and these will have consequences for how the evaluation is to be conducted. The number of audiences may make it impossible for all identified audiences to be considered as either recipients or shapers of the evaluation. This consideration underlies the necessity to recognise that there are practical limitations on how far an evaluator may go in identifying and in taking account of the range of interests of different audiences. Guba and Lincoln (1989:202) suggest that a more precise way of identifying primary and secondary audiences may be to select audiences according to their relative stake in the project. The danger inherent in this view is that *audience* may be perceived as comprising amorphous groups which are assembled in predetermined categories. Patton (1997:43) cautions against this. He suggests rather that evaluators will need to build up trust and rapport with the *individual* members of an audience grouping as people – and not simply as an organisation or group.

Patton (1997:43) proposes that *audience* must be seen as *potential users* of the evaluation. This emphasises the need for the evaluator to understand the politics and values underlying the project. He/she should encourage potential users to speak for themselves, especially where the evaluator is an inappropriate advocate (Patton 1997:365). If we accept Patton's suggestion that *potential users* of a report constitute the *audience*, it makes sense to distinguish between audiences identified as users of the evaluation and audiences to whom the evaluation report will be disseminated.

Since audiences identified as users of the evaluation are the primary audience, they may be considered primary *users*. As such, they should receive the primary attention of the evaluator. On the other hand, the audiences to whom the evaluation report will be disseminated, the *recipients* of the report, are unlikely to *use* the report and should, in terms of this dichotomy, receive less consideration from the evaluators.

It follows from this that a proper appreciation of the notion of *audience* in evaluations could minimise the high number of un-used, dust-gathering reports that abound. There are too many examples of groups who receive reports, but who do not use the results or who do not pay attention to recommendations. The reasons for this may be attributed to the inappropriacy of the evaluation for its audience.

4 The audience/s in the COFE evaluation

Because the **COFE**[1] project was so huge, there were many different groups of stakeholders who expressed an interest in the evaluation. As was suggested earlier in this document, stakeholder interests may have been attributable to their different interests in project outcomes, their different involvements, the different timing of their involvement, their varying commitment to the project or, even, to some or other hidden political agenda. Indeed, all the different interest groupings mentioned in this list could not be treated as one homogenous

1 As far as we know, there is no history of evaluation being conducted in the field of education in Colombia as is described in this article.

audience. While each group represents a stakeholder grouping with an involvement in the project, it is possible that each group represents a different *audience* which has different interests. This certainly creates difficulties for evaluators. Firstly, as indicated above, evaluators are cautioned against simply conflating stakeholders with audience. Patton's (1997) distinction might be usefully applied here – to distinguish between *users* and *recipients* of evaluation reports.

The following section will illustrate how, in the process of the **COFE** evaluation, an assortment of interest groupings were dealt with (or in some cases overlooked) by the group of insider evaluators. The discussion explores the extent to which the evaluators gave consideration to the notion of audience and it will examine the extent to which their sense of audience affected their decisions and actions.

5 Planning the COFE evaluation

Having made the decision to undertake a **COFE** evaluation *with a difference*, the *insider* evaluators encountered a number of difficulties which they retrospectively attributed to the following reasons. Firstly, they indicated that this was the first exercise in which the participants had been required to work together as an evaluation group. This meant that the evaluators had to learn to work together as an evaluation team (as opposed merely to being project participants). Secondly, the evaluators came from different cities and from different universities. This fact brought with it all the problems that are associated with proximity. Thirdly, since several of the evaluators had had no previous experience of carrying out evaluations, they experienced certain difficulties with the process.

What follows is a discussion of a series of problems that the group encountered as they tried to identify the audience/s. The group's problems arose out of the fact that they failed to recognise the significance inherent in the variety of the various audiences whose interests the evaluation was designed to address. Initially, the evaluation team considered the universities to be their only audience. The team had been unaware from the outset that it would have to also report to the Ministry, DFID and ASCUN. The *For whom?* question had not been considered in sufficient detail! When the sense of audience eventually began to impact on their decision-making, they began to believe that the report could be *slanted* in various ways to suit the needs of the different audiences.

Even before they began to focus on the audience, the evaluation team had omitted to consult the *primary* audiences to ascertain their expectations of the investigation. The group of evaluators considered that their task was simply to investigate and report on the impact of the project in the universities. They underestimated the complexity of the task and so were unready for the many problems with which they were faced.

As with all academics, they were restricted by the usual constraints of time. In addition to the evaluation, each member had his/her regular work to contend with – a matter compounded by the difficulties of attempting to communicate across continents and across the country. Even the local academics were scattered over a large geographical area. The problem of proximity was

compounded by one of the criterion for selecting members of the evaluation team, namely that they had to be collectively representative of the different regions of the country. This, it was believed, would forestall the problem of having a report from the capital city being imposed on the rest of the country. While this was an important consideration for ensuring that the report would be credible in the eyes of its (acknowledged) university audience, it nevertheless created additional difficulties. In addition, after ensuring representativeness, the group were under immense pressure to get on and report.

The evaluation began in the absence of adequate consideration of who the audience/s might be. In the midst of these difficulties, there was another problem: the evaluation did not allow or create the opportunity to clarify the expectations of the different audiences. Nor indeed did the evaluators take into account the kind of report which potential audiences might have expected. The group pointed out that they also had no clarity about any particular aspects of content that potential audiences might have wanted to see emphasised. One such example of this kind of limitation was the subsequent discovery (after the report had been disseminated in the Ministry) that the Ministry had actually wanted more information about the impact pertaining to INSET. By the time this request was received, it was already too late to gather the required information – information that would have had serious implications for the sustainability of the project[2].

In the process of the investigation[3], other audiences came to the fore. It was found, for example, that the various universities had identified themselves as constituting an important *audience*, and that they all wanted reports on their performance. When the universities requests were considered, a wide variety of trends were discerned. Because their requests were so divergent, it was impossible to categorise the universities as one homogeneous audience. In fact, what the evaluators had initially perceived as a homogenous group was revealed to be a category with a large number of different needs and concerns.

For example, one similarity among universities was that they *all* wanted to receive a report on their performance. On closer consideration, it was found that some wanted the information *immediately*. Others were genuinely interested in the impact the programme would make on all universities. Yet other universities wanted to know where *they* stood in relation to their fellow universities: they wanted a comparative league table. In such cases, these institutions saw themselves as competitors rather than as participants in the **COFE** project.

It was retrospectively felt that the evaluation team could *not* have gathered the information needed or reported on the wide range of information wanted by the diverse audiences – simply because the needs and expectations of the different audiences were so great. This led the evaluation team to wonder whether it was indeed *possible* to work simultaneously for so many audiences.

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2 Sustainability was a concept which seemed to interest most members of the groups.

3 This was the stage during which the evaluation group met the subjects from one of its audiences during the process of piloting its survey questions. It was in this stage that the evaluation team got its first sense of audience.

6 Reporting the evaluation

The final stage of the process was the reporting stage. During this stage, the evaluation group was forcibly made conscious of the differences between its audiences. What was it to say to each of them? How would the group of evaluators say what they needed to say? How much could the group claim on the basis of its findings? It proved necessary and useful to have guidance from a consultant at this stage.

The dissemination once again meant that the evaluation team was confronted by a number of complexities pertaining to the different audiences. This problem may have been partly attributable to the fact that the evaluation group was made up of academics who were required to report to civil servants in the Ministry, and to foreign civil servants in DFID. The evaluators' backgrounds were very different from those of its audience. This was an obstacle which the evaluation team could have overcome had they not ignored an initial suggestion to include someone from the Ministry in the evaluation team. The academics had initially felt that this would not be necessary – a consideration informed by the traditional rivalry between officials and academics (apart from being an attempt, on the part of the team members, to maintain the general equilibrium of the team by not bringing in outsiders).

It was in this stage of the project that the Ministry made it clear that while it was gratified to hear that the project had achieved effected various changes and improvements in pre-service education, this was not actually the outcome about which they wanted to hear. They were more interested in the impact of the project on INSET.

The evaluators found that the compilation of the reports and their dissemination had taken far more time and energy (and had been a far more complex process) than the group had initially envisaged. This complexity was caused by the multiplicity and variety of the audiences who were emerging – a problem aggravated by the difficulties associated with the lack of both proximity and time. It is contended that these problems might have been avoided to some extent had the team taken cognisance of its various audiences and had there also been sufficient time to review the drafts in order to ensure that they met the needs of their audiences.

Had the team moreover allowed for the interim reporting to the identified audiences, the report could easily have addressed most of the interests which were not addressed in the final document.

7 Lessons learned: Some recommendations for taking audience into account

If one looks back on the experience, hindsight makes it easy to make a number of recommendations about how one might take the audience of an evaluation into an account.

The following suggestions might help evaluators to do just that.

- Identify the audience or audiences during the *conceptualisation* stage of the evaluation.
- Limit the number of audiences for the evaluation to a number which can actually be managed. Do not attempt to focus on too many audiences. You cannot please all audiences at once.
- Identify *primary* audiences because they are potential end-users of the evaluation.
- Wherever possible or appropriate, include representatives of the audience in the evaluation team.
- Consult the audience at an early stage so as to gain an understanding of its expectations and requirements. Negotiate your intentions with them so as to broaden their concept of what an evaluation is.
- Get the audience to identify criteria for the evaluation (you may add to these or modify them with the audience). This may also help you determine more specific goals for the evaluation than you have or were given initially.
- A stronger sense of audience will help you to develop more appropriate instruments and questions.
- Disseminate interim reports to the audiences.
- Ask for comments on draft reports and use these to check the acceptability and usefulness of the report. Do not, however, be bullied into falsifying or *toning down* what you understand to be the truth.
- Remember that your audience may not see itself as one grouping. It is up to you to give it a sense of self.

6 Conclusion

When one examines the concept of audience, and the experience of a group of novice evaluators with regard to audience, it becomes evident that evaluators cannot afford to take audiences for granted. Consideration of who comprises the audience, and what these people want, is important for the utility of the evaluation on which you will expend a huge amount of energy.

3.3 Impact studies and their audiences

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This paper considers the variety of audiences that are implied by multi-partnered projects and explores reasons why they are thought of as recipients for the project report. The paper considers various issues pertaining to the dissemination of the report, such as: Who writes such a report? Who reads it? In what language is it produced? How is it disseminated? Each of these questions is addressed in relation to the **ODA ELT Project: Nicaragua**, which was implemented between March 1993 and July 1996.

The project was collaborative and involved a wide range of potential audiences, including the ODA and three Nicaraguan institutions: the Ministry of Education, The National Autonomous University of Nicaragua and the University of Central America. The project was intended to upgrade the teaching of English in secondary schools and to assist with the development of INSET and PRESET in the universities and the Ministry of Education. The paper describes how contentious it may be to compile and disseminate impact reports.

1 Introduction

When impact studies and evaluation reports are produced, their reception gives rise to a number of problems. Who writes such reports? Who reads them? In what language has it been produced? How is it being disseminated?

The purpose of this paper is not to address all of these issues in detail, but merely to indicate the kind of complexities inherent in dissemination by indicating the varied audiences that are implicit when Impact Study reports are produced. The basis for the discussion will be the dissemination of the Impact Study report for the **ODA ELT Project: Nicaragua.** In this paper, we shall look at the audiences for the report, the way in which these audiences received the report, and the form in which they received its message.

2 Issues pertaining to reporting to a variety of audiences

There are a number of general issues which recur throughout this discussion. We do not intend to give the impression that we have any definitive answers to these issues – nor indeed that they might ever require answers of that kind. But we have realised just how important issues such as these may be. We also believe that precisely such issues need to be considered when reports on impact assessment are drawn up. The issues that we will consider in this paper are:

- the authorship of the report
- the language in which the report is produced
- access to the report
- the delivery of the report
- the form in which it is delivered.

We will begin by addressing the issues of the authorship of the report and the language in which it was produced (in this particular case).

21 The authorship of reports

It is usually assumed that project coordinators will write the report (if they are British native speakers of English). This often happens merely because the authorship is described in those terms in the project memorandum. This, however, may not necessarily happen. Thus, for example, in a recent Impact Study undertaken in Romania, the report was written by the Romanian team in two languages – English and Romanian.

In the case of the Nicaraguan project, the outsiders were able to facilitate the writing of the report and the smooth running of the project. Several members of the project team felt that the introduction of people from outside the context had provided a catalyst for cooperative work among the main stakeholders.

For a number of years mutual mistrust had existed among the principal players, namely the universities and the Ministry of Education. At the same time, however, all the stakeholders realised that there would be mutual benefits if all concerned could work together, and so they had searched for ways to bring this about (despite a discouraging previous history of non-cooperation).

To achieve their aims, the stakeholders made it a deliberate strategy to bring in people from the outside who might have the skills to facilitate this process. The **ODA ELT Project** represented neutral ground, and the presence of *Cheles* (the Nicaraguan name for foreigners – literally meaning *blondies*) helped the process to get off the ground. At the beginning of the project, the foreigners often acted as go-betweens. This also meant that the *Cheles* had degrees of access, both for the general purposes of the project and for the collection of impact data, that local people sometimes did not have, and this facilitated the production of the Impact Study report.

2.2 The language of the reports

The language used to write such a report is an important issue, especially if no common language is shared by all participants, sponsors and stakeholders. Language affects both the production of the report and the way in which it reaches its audiences.

The **ODA ELT Project: Nicaragua** report was produced in English. Two British project coordinators wrote the report. Although were able to speak Spanish, they could not write sufficiently well in Spanish to produce a report that was acceptable to Spanish first-language speakers. This was a potential obstacle to some members of the audience since Spanish was the first language of all the Nicaraguan participants, with the exception of one or two who had been born, or had lived at some stage on the Atlantic coast (in an English-speaking area). But even such people often possessed a far greater proficiency in reading and writing Spanish than English.

The fact that the coordinators were English-speakers was one of the major reasons why the report was produced in English, but it was not the only one. The structure of the project was such that there were no full-time Nicaraguan members; trainers were incorporated at particular times (as, for example, for training workshops and for intensive courses). Thus, although some twenty people were involved in the assessment, they all worked full-time for their institution and consequently did not have the necessary time to dedicate to analysing data and writing up findings. Although some capacity for producing such a report had been developed (five team members were writing dissertations based on topics that were related to the project), none of these members could afford the time required to write the impact assessment report. As a result, the only full-time members of the team who were available and able to write the report were the project coordinators.

A second issue was that it was necessary to build up the capacity to produce research in English in the country. There was a dearth of ELT research in Nicaragua, and what existed had been produced in Spanish.

The shortage of local research into ELT was enhanced by the baseline study of the project which had been produced by the British project coordinators and by a number of other shorter research papers. At last there existed an English-language body of research into ELT in Nicaragua.[1]

Thirdly, the use of English in English classes as the main language of instruction in secondary schools (rather than only Spanish) was one of the main goals of the project. Hence producing the report in English was seen as part of the promotion of English throughout the English teaching and learning community.

Fourthly, the main project sponsor was the ODA (as it was then known), and it was unclear as to whether the ODA would have accepted a report in Spanish. For the reasons outlined above, the report was produced in English.[2]

2.3 The audiences for the Impact Study

It was intended from the outset that the Impact Study report would not be an internal ODA document but rather that it would be public and open to all involved in the project and beyond. We shall now consider the main audiences for the Impact Study, and how they were reached.

2.3.1 The host institutions

Two major universities, the University of Central America (UCA), the Autonomous National University of Nicaragua (UNAN), and the Ministry of Education (MED) were the main Nicaraguan sponsors of the project. There were representatives of these institutions on the steering committee of the project, which had been established six months after its initiation. The committee was kept informed during regular project steering committee meetings of the progress of the research, both collectively in committee meetings, and individually, on an *ad hoc* basis. Of the steering committee, a sizeable number could speak and read English although several others had little or no ability to speak English. For this reason, all steering committee meetings were always conducted in Spanish. Since the British counterparts were all fluent in Spanish, conducting all meetings in Spanish was not a problem. However, when it came to the stage of writing the reports, the intention to write in English gave rise to several problems.

As the main report took some time to write (especially since project activities were continuing), it was necessary to produce some form of interim report for committee members. It was neither logistically possible nor financially feasible to produce a report in Spanish, as translation is very expensive in Nicaragua, and, in addition, it takes a great deal of time. The solution decided upon by the project coordinators was to produce a *digest* of the main findings.

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1 The impact study is also now being used as material for analysis in the Methodology courses in the new TEFL programme at UCA. Also about five master's dissertations pertaining to the project have been carried out.

2 The line management of the project was the British Ambassador who could read Spanish.

A summary of the findings comprising about 20 pages, mostly in graphic form, was produced. Some of the members could read English, but for those who could not and indeed for those who had neither the time nor the desire to read the report in full, this seemed the best solution. Although this report contained minimal text, it included lots of charts and graphs which graphically depicted the findings, and there were, in addition, glossaries with explanations in Spanish. The report was then discussed in committee, and any questions concerning the results were addressed.

Each institution subsequently received a copy of the main report, but the short graphic report was most effective for many people – mainly because it could be read in a short time, was not too dependent on language, and could easily be discussed in a meeting.

This summary report (rather than the full report) was used as the basis for discussions about future plans for sustainable activity after support from the ODA had ceased, even though the main report was available if necessary.

2.3.2 Trainers

The direct beneficiaries of the project were intended to be, *firstly*, the teacher trainers at the two main universities, and, *secondly,* the majority of teachers in secondary schools. A team of 20 Nicaraguan trainers was involved in the research process, and they were constantly consulted about the general progress of the research. These trainers all spoke and read English, and so language did not pose a problem. Although it was made available to all, most of the trainers did not have the time to read the report in its entirety, and they therefore also found that the shorter document was extremely convenient.

After the main Impact Study report had been finished, a copy was distributed to the institutions and was then discussed in meetings. It was read by trainers in both its abridged and full-length forms. Although those who intended to do further research into ELT read the full report, most of the others found the abridged report far more convenient. Every trainer received a copy of the short report and a number of copies of the main report were made available to the departments. This meant that if most people preferred to read the abridged version, they could do so – since each institution had a copy of the full report.

2.4 Teachers

In terms of ownership, it seems reasonable to suppose that the secondary school teachers, who were the intended beneficiaries of the project, should receive a copy of the final Impact Study. It would, however, simply have been too difficult and too costly for this to occur, and other means were used to communicate the findings to these teachers. It was not intended that the research team should take decisions about access on behalf of these primary stakeholders. The decision was based on making the report as accessible as possible to those people who might be involved in activities contributing to the sustainability of the project. Although there was no bar on who might read the report in theory (since it was a public

document), real access was often prohibited by circumstances. For example, it was unrealistic to expect that a teacher living in a small village in Nueva Segovia near to the Honduran border, and who could only be reached after quite a hazardous journey, would have easy or unlimited access to the report. It seemed reasonable, given the context, to find alternative ways to reach teachers.

Considering that more than 600 teachers in all parts of the country had in some way been reached by the project, it was not feasible, from a logistical or financial point of view, to distribute copies of the reports to all of them. Teachers who had received training through the project were often reached through the newsletter of the national association of English teachers (ANPI). Even the Ministry of Education found it difficult to reach many of the teachers in out-lying regions, and as much as the ministry attempted to facilitate communications with the teachers, this channel was never entirely satisfactory. A summary of the main findings was therefore included in the relevant edition of the ANPI newsletter. This seems to be one of the most efficient channels of communication. There were also regular meetings with individual teachers to discuss the report.

2.5 ODA

ODA were the British sponsors of the project, and as such were the sponsors of the Impact Study. The main report was seen both in its draft from and in its completed form by the ODA. The results and observations it contained formed the basis for a review of the project. This was a participatory exercise involving the ODA education adviser and two members of the project team from two of the key institutions involved in the project.

Of possible importance to the ODA were issues of accountability, value for money, and sustainability. There were also indications at various times of a hope that the Impact Study might contribute to developing methodology for educational impact assessment in general. The education adviser used the Impact Study as a reference point for the project, and subjected it to a process of scrutiny by covering the same areas herself through discussions with stakeholders and target groups.

2.6 The British Embassy

The ODA project in Nicaragua was unusual for an ELT project because the in-country management was conducted through the British Embassy (there being no British Council or any other similar organisation in Nicaragua). The British Ambassador was the line manager of the British project coordinators in-country. He himself had also been very active in the project as a member of the steering committee. Furthermore, in the year after the project had ended, he was placed in control of the British aid budget for Nicaragua and so wanted to see what kind of investment he might need to make in order to ensure sustainability. His interest, therefore, came from a number of angles: he was sponsor, manager, and project participant. It may also be possible that he felt the necessity to 'fly the flag' (diplomatically speaking) by showing what Britain had been doing in Nicaragua.

As with the ODA, the ambassador was shown the report at the draft stage and made comments, where relevant. He also received both forms of the report.

2.7 Lancaster University

Lancaster University had provided consultancy for the project in its initial planning stages and for the Impact Study itself. They were also the principal overseas training providers. They therefore had professional concerns about their effectiveness in these roles and also felt that the Impact Study would contribute to the development of a methodology for assessing impact.

Professor Charles Alderson provided consultancy which directly related to the procedures and the production of the Impact Study, while John McGovern had provided some consultancy on the baseline study. Both consultants were kept informed of the process when the Impact Study was being carried out, and they both received a copy of the draft and the final report, as well as a copy of the short interim report. This they shared with the trainers and developers at the Institute for English Language Education (IELE).

2.8 Overseas Service Bureau and the Australian Personnel Services Overseas

Two NGO organisations, the Overseas Service Bureau (OSB) from Australia and the Personnel Services Overseas (APSO) of the Republic of Ireland had contributed teachers and trainers to the project, two of whom participated in the Impact Study research. The research was discussed with these representatives and with the personnel who had participated. A copy of the report was distributed to representatives.

The European Union (EU) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), who were prospective donors, were also informed of the activities and results of the project. It was hoped thereby that they might be persuaded to support an expansion of the project. They were considered to be recipients since the project team had hoped that it would expand to cover all the areas of the curriculum. For this reason, a summary of the results was distributed to them. This process eventually led to their funding a sector-wide education programme, which was recently initiated. The coordinators of the programme are currently using the Impact Study to inform the structure of the EU programme.

2.9 ELT Professionals

Many different research groups, in particular the Management of Innovation in Language Education (MILE) research group at Lancaster University, have contributed to the process of bringing research of this kind into the public domain. The British Council also used the Impact Study report to compile a report on ELT in Central America.

Since there are many potential audiences for a study of this kind, it is important to consider how such audiences may be reached, the form in which the results of such of research can be disseminated, and how the messages contained in such reports are received by their various audiences.

3 Conclusion

This paper considers the variety of audiences that are implicit in the ODA Nicaragua ELT project. It argues that issues pertaining to the authorship, the language in which the report is written and the accessibility of the report are more complex than they may initially seem. What was hoped in this paper was to alert the reader to some of the pitfalls that may be encountered if the actual reporting stage of an assessment fails to take potential audiences into consideration.

4

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL AND EXTERNAL RESEARCHERS

4.1 A note on a participatory impact study in Eritrea: exploring the relations between national and external researchers

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SETER Project
Eritrea

In this note on a participatory impact assessment undertaken in Eritrea, Tefsai Bariaghaber describes some of the *highs* and *lows* of the experience. He begins his paper by outlining how the *scene was set* for the impact assessment to proceed. He points out that the mutual sharing of ideas and the collaborative planning of the research process confers many benefits on local and external researchers. He then also describes examples of problems that arise when the external research team departs.

The problems he describes are mostly attributable to the geographic separation of the two teams – a factor that causes frustration in local players who feel that they have lost their stake in the ownership of the assessment project. As a result of the separation, local players are not able to contribute ideas or recommendations that they might have arrived at through their post-research discussions and reflection.

Bariaghaber suggests that local researchers would benefit from a more sustained stay by external researchers in the local country. This undoubtedly would answer to some extent the questions about ownership. He also indicates that a more lengthy stay would contribute to the development of the data processing capacity of local researchers – a need which, he indicates, ought to be addressed.

The paper concludes with Bariaghaber's contention that collaborative research benefits both internal and external researchers. Thus, for example, he suggests that the external researchers would not have had the easy access they enjoyed had they attempted to proceed independently of local players.

1 Introduction

My experience of the Eritrean project impact assessment and other local field research leads me to believe that a participatory research approach is the most effective way of assessing impact. The **Eritrean Impact Study** clearly demonstrated that the participation of local researchers and their consequential interaction with external researchers created benefits and learning opportunities for both local and external teams.

The two teams participated in the planning stages and jointly produced an appropriate research design. This activity was squarely based on our agreement about our central purpose, which was to ascertain whether or not the project had accomplished its aims. Although collaboration was one of the main factors that influenced the relations between the local/national researchers and their external counterparts, different perceptions and expectations of the project on the part of the two groups of researchers created different expectations about the ultimate aims of the project.

Because local and external researchers were somewhat at variance about what might constitute an optimal research design and adequate goals, and because both parties were motivated by differing perceptions and motivations, this variance of opinion and purposes inevitably influenced both the design of the instruments and the research agenda. This, however, in no way detracted from the benefits of collaboration. In contrast, one might argue that the differences actually enriched the ultimate research design as well as the final report.

2 Setting the scene

The arrival of external researchers for the assessment study conducted in Eritrea was met with enthusiasm and was welcomed by Eritrea's Ministry of Education. For the duration of the research exercise, the relationship between the national research team and the external researchers was harmonious, understanding and cooperative. This positive relationship between the two teams was evident from the moment the external team arrived. In their initial interactions, the external team orientated the local team about what they were hoping to achieve during their stay in the country by describing the technical details of the process. The local team responded to these briefings by outlining their hopes, expectations and plans for the project. After much discussion and a fruitful exchange of ideas, both teams were able to reach agreement about a framework for the project.

This initial orientation was crucial since it formed the cornerstone of a positive relationship between the two sides. The researcher considers such mutual interaction to be an the essential part of any process of this kind because it affords both sides the opportunities to exchange ideas about *what* and *how* things will be done. Although initial bonding between the two teams was strong, their harmonious relationship was unfortunately complicated in the latter stages of the process and this caused several difficulties. The difficulties that arose were the following:

2.1 Geographical separation

After our initial orientation, the local research team moved back to the sites of the research (i.e. back to the schools) while the external researchers returned to their home country. This geographical separation unfortunately created a break in continuity between the two teams of researchers. What the local team had hoped for was continuous cooperation and immediate feedback. Instead, feedback was delayed and the separation resulted in a number of associated problems.

2.2 Lack of communication

Another factor which is associated with geographical separation and which influenced the relationship between local and external researchers was that the two teams of researchers were not able to interact and hence were unable to exchange ideas about emerging problems and other factors that influenced the work of the project as it progressed. Thus, for example, when local researchers thought of new categories or ideas that they felt might enhance the research, they were unable to test such ideas with the external researchers. Certainly, the communications in Eritrea were such that it was not easy to incorporate any new components into the research process after the external researchers had departed.

2.3 Lack of capacity building

Local researchers in developing countries often tend to rely on external partners to assist with the development of local capacity. This was one of the expectations that the local team had entertained – but because of the separation, was not achieved. The local team, for example, felt unable to cope as well as they would have liked during the data processing stage of the project. By the time the project entered this phase, the external consultants had already left for home. The local researchers had recognised their need to develop the capacity for data processing – especially with regard to the tabulation of information and the categorisation of items during the data collecting process.

When problems began to emerge at this stage, the local researchers realised that the external researchers could have made a decisive contribution by helping to enlarge the skills base of the locals, and that this contribution might radically have affected the quality of the intended results. Because the national research team was limited in their understanding of the theoretical basis of data analysis, it would have made all the difference in the world if the British team had been able to stay longer in Eritrea. If they had been able to stay, they could have helped local researchers to gain competence and confidence in the theory and practice of data analysis at this crucial stage. This would have yielded better results and more meaningful recommendations in the final report, and the impact assessment might also have contributed to sustainability.

3 Conclusion

Although this paper outlines some of the problems inherent in the relationship between internal and external researchers, it is nevertheless clear that we, as local researchers, were able to experience many of the benefits that arise out of the process of participatory research – in spite of the difficulties engendered by the problems (the chief of which was the premature – in our view – separation of the two teams of researchers).

The participatory approach is extremely beneficial to national researchers because it gives them the chance to refine their knowledge of research methods and techniques. Because it does this, it contributes to the development of local human resources. On the other hand, the process surely also benefits visiting researchers because it enables them to gain easy access to the local context. Indeed, it is my contention that this *process of immersion* in local culture (a consequence of participatory research and collaboration with the local team) benefits external researchers long after they have left the original site of research activities.

4.2 The relationships between national researchers and external researchers

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In this paper, Harvey Smith and Paul Bennel consider some of the issues pertaining to the relationships of collaboration between local researchers and external consultants. The paper draws on the experience of the DFID-funded **English Language Teaching (ELT)** Impact Studies undertaken in Angola and Eritrea. Both projects endeavoured to assess the impact of ELT projects funded by DFID, and involved teams of local researchers who were trained and supported by three external consultants. Smith proceeds with a discussion of a series of conceptual and practical project issues that impact on the relationship between internal and external researchers.

Against the background of these issues, they grapple with ownership-type problems that researchers may encounter. The first relates to the difficulty of finding the right balance between local ownership and achieving the externally imposed terms of reference. They argue that if an impact study is to be locally owned, the study must meet local needs and should be undertaken in a manner that is locally acceptable.

This view is contrasted with a consideration of research activities which are external to the project and which are intended to enable external funding agencies to rate achievements. In such cases, they argue, some way must be found of making externally imposed criteria and expectations acceptable to those who are locally involved. Smith and Bennell's conclusion leads them to ask the vital question, *What sort of compromise might be possible under the circumstances?*

1 Introduction

Although an impact study of an aid-funded project may, in theory, be undertaken entirely by external consultants or entirely by researchers of the country where the project is taking place, such studies in practice are most likely to be undertaken by a mixed team. This paper considers some of the issues that arise as a result of collaborative relationships between local researchers and the external consultants.[1]

The paper draws on the experience of the DFID-funded **English Language Teaching (ELT) Impact Study** in Angola and Eritrea. This study, undertaken in 1997 and 1998, looked at the impact of ELT projects funded by ODA/DFID in the two countries and involved teams of local researchers trained and supported by three external consultants. When the studies in each of the countries have been completed, a comparative analysis will be undertaken. In a briefing to the consultants, DFID staff emphasised that the study should not be a conventional evaluation based on project logical frameworks, and that local perceptions should be gathered from stakeholder meetings and research activities undertaken by the local teams.

Both Angola and Eritrea are countries which are deeply involved in violent conflict and they therefore experience special difficulties that may not by *typical* of the countries where impact studies are usually undertaken. Many of the educated nationals of both countries live abroad and there is a limited capacity within the countries – especially within the institutions and departments of the ministries of education – to undertake research.

Undertaking such studies has enabled the consultants to reflect on the nature and practice of impact studies, and a number of issues have been identified for discussion here. These have been divided into ones that may be labelled *conceptual*.

2 Conceptual issues

Conceptual questions raise questions about the nature of an impact study as an undertaking. They of necessity raise questions that relate to the practice or processes of undertaking such a study. The kinds of questions that were raised in the assessments of the aforementioned projects were as follows:

2.1 Ownership

Just as the success of externally initiated projects depends in part on the extent to which local ownership and commitment can be established, the same is true of an impact study (although there is often less time is available to achieve this). The ELT impact studies in Angola and Eritrea were initiated by the agency (ODA/DFID) which had established and

1 Following the brief given to the writers, the paper will deal solely with the perspective of the external consultants.

funded the ELT projects in the two countries and not by stakeholders in the countries. The success of the studies therefore depends in part on the extent to which local motivation can be established and ownership achieved. This, in turn, depends in part on the ability and willingness (of the personnel of the projects whose impact is being studied) to raise the awareness of the ministry of education or other institutions[2] about the need for such a study and about the lessons which might be learnt from the results. If one considers the experience of the Angolan and Eritrean studies, one sees that the response of local institutions varied according to the extent to which they are able to identify ways in which the study might resonate with their own agendas.

2.2 Perceptions of the role of consultants

The role of the external consultants may be perceived differently by different stakeholders. Such perceptions may depend on many factors, such as:

- the nature of the involvement expected of the consultants in each of the main stages of the impact study[3]
- the extent to which the national researchers perceive themselves or are perceived as being able to act independently of the consultants
- the nature of the relations established between the consultants and the expatriate project personnel (if a project is an ongoing one)

In the **ELT Impact Study**, the aim was to establish the consultants' role as that of *external advisers* who have a facilitating and guiding function – rather than as directors of the local teams. Even so, the consultants are inevitably seen as in some way representing DFID and may therefore have a disproportionate influence.

2.3 Using a multidisciplinary team

A strength of the **ELT Impact Study** is undoubtedly attributable to the fact that it comprises a multidisciplinary team of consultants whose fields of expertise cover ELT, economic and social development (including gender issues). This has encouraged a broadening of the field in which the country studies look for evidence of impact. Although the external consultants perceive themselves as a team, and in spite of the fact that they have made individual visits to each country, they may not be perceived locally in the same way. Moreover, it was not possible for the local players to replicate our notion of a multidisciplinary team since they were unable to field people with experience in investigating socio-economic issues.

2.4 Baseline data

It is difficult for local researchers to assess impact where little or no baseline data are available. Baseline studies would have contributed to the *measuring* of the post-project situation by enabling comparisons to be made against pre-project data. In both studies, the external consultants had

2 This would need to be done well before the actual study is started.
3 This includes consultation with stakeholders, design, data collection, data analysis and report writing.

access to documents compiled by DFID, which describe the pre-project situation in *outsider terms*. (Local researchers would not normally have access to such documents.) Equivalent descriptions in insider terms are unlikely to exist. Local researchers may not have been around before the project started or they may themselves have been involved in a very specific part of the project and so be unaware of the wider picture.

2.5 Levels of impact

This issue refers to the balance between looking narrowly (in the case of an ELT impact study) for impact on ELT activity and looking for wider socio-economic impact. This is especially problematic when local researchers are drawn from a narrow group in the ELT field or from a ministry of education. In such cases there may be a desire to focus largely or entirely on looking for evidence of impact in the ELT classroom and even a reluctance to go beyond the direct outputs of the project. This can cause tensions between local and external researchers.

2.6 Training researchers while simultaneously undertaking research

The role of the external consultants includes training the local researchers and assisting them with the design of the research, the development of the instruments, the analysis and interpretation of the data and the presentation of the findings. How does one balance these roles? Although the training role is essential to building on local capacity, this may cause the external consultants to perceive this *training* as being more important than their roles as facilitators and managers of the research. They may therefore not consequently fulfil their terms of reference.

2.7 Remuneration and responsibility

The relationship between external and local researchers is also influenced by whether or how the local researchers are remunerated. Ownership of the study by a local institution would imply that the institution remunerates the researchers (even where an external agency assists with the budget for this), and the external researchers are not seen as *buying* the research. In one of the countries where an ELT Impact Study was undertaken, local institutions were unable to compensate local researchers. In this case, they were paid a fee by the external consultants. The perception created by this was that individual researchers were employed by the outside consultant agency and that institutional (and hence also local ownership of the study) were therefore limited.

3 Practical issues

While conceptual questions raise questions that relate to difficulties arising from the research process, there are several logistical or practical issues that impact on both the research enterprise and the relationship between the local and external researchers.

3.1 Location

A problem that we experienced while managing the **ELT Impact Studies** for Eritrea and Angola was that, in both instances, the management and coordination was located outside the countries concerned. The management was therefore perceived as driven by the client (DFID) – at a time when engendering a sense of local ownership was seen as critical to the success of the studies.

3.2 Number of institutions involved

In both studies we experienced difficulties with coordinating research and ensuring cooperation because in both cases more than one institution was involved in assessing the impact of the respective projects. This was particularly noticeable in those cases where there was a mixture of government and autonomous or semi-autonomous institutions, such as a ministry of education and a university. If there is no institutional hierarchy, the person who is appointed as team leader or as research coordinator may find it difficult to secure the necessary collaboration. In such cases, requirements such as obtaining agreement about deadlines (to name but one issue) may prove to be extremely difficult. When this happens, external consultants might find themselves assuming a coordinating role by default.

3.3 Selection of researchers

There are a number of practical issues which are relevant to the way in which a local team is selected and managed, and to what the role of external consultants might be in this process. These include the extent to which external consultants can influence the size and composition of the research team, their gender balance, the level or mix of research skills, the identification and inclusion of disinterested parties, and the commitment or level of involvement of the team members. Also relevant are issues such as whether or not researchers are released from other duties for the period of the study and whether or not remuneration is necessary. In the Eritrean and Angolan studies, there was reluctance on the part of participating institutions to have people from outside those institutions in the research teams. The result of this was that the teams did not have the insider/ outsider balance which the external consultants would have wished to see. Such differences can lead to tension between external consultants and institutions.

3.4 Timing

The timing of assessments is also a significant issue which needs to be considered. In Angola and Eritrea, the funding agency (and not the local players) decided when the impact assessment should take place. In both cases, the process started while the projects were still being implemented and while expatriate project staff were still in their postings. This posed difficulties for both the internal and external researchers. For the former, the timing of the investigation increased the difficulties that local researchers experienced in assuming a detached attitude to the actual project – and this

meant that they were less able to look for impact beyond the current project activities. The consequences for the external consultant were that they experienced difficulties (in the limited time available) in setting up the research programme and convening stakeholder meetings immediately after they had arrived in the country.

3.5 Local realities and external deadlines

Progress in the research depends on the extent to which local researchers are able to undertake the work without disruption from unforeseen events (the **ELT Impact Study** in Angola and Eritrea had to compete with wars and strikes) or are able to work at their tasks without being asked to undertake other activities. Since impact studies generally have to be completed in a very short time-scale, any delays resulting from unforeseen local events (such as in war-torn countries) will have a greater effect, as there is less capacity to absorb them.

4 Conclusion

In essence, the issues above relate to the difficulty of finding the right sort of balance between local ownership and achieving the externally imposed terms of reference. If an impact study is to be locally owned and is to provide a ministry of education, or another local institution with information about the effect that a project has had, then the study must meet local needs and must be undertaken in a manner that is locally acceptable.

If the investigation is to be an external activity that enable an external funding agency to find out how effectively its projects have contributed to development (assuming that it is possible to attribute evidence of impact to the external funding), then some way must be found of making externally imposed criteria and expectations acceptable to those who are locally involved. The key question then becomes, *What sort of compromise is possible under the circumstances?*

4.3 Impact studies: the role of an insider/outsider

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In this paper, Mohammed Melouk discusses the complexities inherent in the roles played by *insiders* and *outsiders* in project impact research. He argues that educational projects are far too frequently designed by outsiders who fail to involve the supposed beneficiaries of their projects in any phase of the project's design. This oversight more often than not gives rise to a situation in which those for whom the project is intended receive the project with indifference – or reject it outright. He examines the possibility that external consultants might assume the role of project *insiders*, but notes that this would require them to grapple with situational issues – a process that can easily become lengthy, expensive and self-defeating. He proceeds to coin the phrase *insider/outsider* to refer to those locals who are outsiders to the project but insiders to its situational context. He then proposes several good reasons for including such players in the impact assessment team.

He points out that the insider/outsider adds (among other things) a necessary *human* dimension to such assessments. The insider/outsider is uniquely positioned to mediate the various stages of the research by facilitating communication between the target population and the evaluation team and by orientating the interpretation of data in such way that insightful and contextually appropriate conclusions are obtained.

Melouk situates his arguments against the backdrop of the **Moroccan ELT project**.

1 Introduction

Assessing the impact of an educational project is not an easy matter, especially when the aim of the exercise is to determine exactly, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, the exact nature and extent of change which is being sought by the project. This complexity may present an insurmountable hurdle – whether the evaluative enterprise is carried out by people directly involved in the project (the project designers and implementers) or by outsiders or external experts (or a combination of both).

I contend that the sometimes baffling complexities of impact assessment are caused by the fact that education and educational change are situated in a complex matrix of causes and effects that include cultural, socio-economic, psychological, material and administrative processes. Impact assessments, by their very nature, require a diverse number of role players, including, among others, decision-makers, funding organisations, project designers, administrators, inspectors, teachers, students and pupils.

Quite apart from this, the unique geographical, social, economic, political and educational conditions that gave rise to the project in the first place cause project evaluators to become enmeshed (whether they like it or not) in a complex of feelings and attitudes that invariably impact strongly on the assessment process. Educational projects which are designed for developing countries are far too often designed without any input (and in the absence of) those for whom the project is intended. This inevitably gives rise to a variety of attitudes on the part of the local population to the project. Attitudes may range from enthusiastic adherence (the rarest!) to qualified but sullen acceptance, indifference, or simple outright a rejection – at least at the psychological level.

Although the emergence of such attitudes among the target population may be attributed more to negative emotional reactions rather than reasoned intellectual objections, the effect on the project itself is nearly always emasculating or debilitating. This, sadly, is inevitably the case when the local target population have not been involved in the initial stages of the project and do not fully understand its methods, aims and objectives – and hence, of course, cannot appreciate its potential benefits. In such cases, an accurate assessment of the impact of the project cannot be obtained without considering the potential effect of such attitudes on the outcome of the project. The assumption here is that the contribution of insiders, who are outsiders to the project but insiders to its situational context (hence the term *insider/outsider*), may be able to contribute insights of crucial importance.

Impact studies: the role of an insider/outsider

2 The rationale for an insider/outsider in an impact study

In the light of these considerations, it is necessary to discuss the insider/outsider dimensions of impact studies. The discussion is based on conclusions drawn from personal experience in a collaborative impact study entitled **The Moroccan Item Banking Project.**[1] In this paper I have attempted to highlight the importance of local human abilities in any endeavour to assess the impact of an educational project, without, of course, completely ignoring the legitimate concerns of objective educational evaluation or of funding bodies.

Given the nature of the educational enterprise, the implementation of any educational project is bound to generate a dynamic of its own, which is often not anticipated in the original design or sufficiently catered for or monitored during the implementation stages. In addition, any project involving many people will engender varying *levels* and *degrees* of involvement. The people directly concerned or those for whom the project has been designed may take a route (in terms of objectives and priorities) slightly different from the one originally intended. They may also have a hidden agenda which may not correspond to the actual aims of the project, but which can decisively affect the desired impact. The presence of these *side effects* are generally linked more to attitudes than to technical aspects of the project (knowledge, skills, etc).[2] They raise the question of how to deal with these phenomena and what place they should have in the study. In other words, what relationship should hold between predicted and unpredicted outcomes in the light of the type of attitudes generated by the project?

A number of strategies and techniques, borrowed from educational research and testing, management education, sociology of education and econometrics are used to investigate the impact of an educational project. Care is taken to collect relevant information and also to triangulate data. Depending on whether the objective of the evaluation exercise is to assess the degree of achievement in terms of value for money (quantifiable indicators) or simply to measure the nature and degree of change in qualitative terms, qualitative data is generally used to supplement or reinforce quantitative data or the reverse. Furthermore, the evaluator may adopt the project designer's perspective, or a monetarist one (value for money), or even an educational or academic perspective (the requirements and constraints of research itself).

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1 Originally, the project aimed at modernising the Moroccan ELT curriculum and assessment, but during a new project phase, the focus shifted to assessment with the entire project concentrating on technical aspects of item banking.

2 Throughout the various stages of the evaluation process, it became clear that most teachers and testers do not fully understand the ultimate aims of the project though the latter can identify immediate objectives. Moreover, some negative attitudes are in sharp contrast with what has successfully been achieved in the area of testing.

However, although it is possible to gather a rich database, *reading* or interpreting data to assess the real impact of the project, if not carried out from various perspectives, may lead to conclusions which only partly reflect the true state of affairs. This is not to suggest that the above-mentioned perspectives are not important, but simply that they need to be gauged in terms of local features and characteristics. In fact, the local perspective – in terms of population, local conditions and so on – is rarely taken into account. Hence the need in any impact study to incorporate the *local culture* – in its widest sense – through the association of an insider/outsider. In terms of this approach, the triangulation of data can be paralleled with some form of *triangulation of interpreting data, drawing conclusions,* and *making recommendations.*

3 The role of an insider/outsider in an impact study

Educational impact may be investigated in either qualitative or quantitative terms (or both), and its scope and extent may be assessed in terms of change in the following areas:

- *Knowledge*: complete, incomplete, partial, new information building on old information, updating old information
- *Skills*: new skills, transfer of skills, building on old skills
- *Attitudes:* positive, negative, neutral, indifferent

While it is relatively easy to measure the nature and scope of change in the first two areas in quantitative and qualitative terms, searching for the effects of the last area on an educational project may be a daunting enterprise, especially for an outsider. Even the assessment of the first two (knowledge and skills), may yield different interpretations when looked at in terms of attitudes and the local culture. Obviously, certain attitudinal judgements made by the target population may be indicative of the success or failure of a project. But these judgements will not have significant value if they are not considered in the context of local features or characteristics, in other words, understood within the context of the local culture and mentality. How can an insider contribute to identifying those features which may be crucial for determining the degree of success or otherwise of the project?

31 Some benefits associated with the inclusion of an insider outsider

An insider/outsider, if well prepared and trained, can contribute from a vantage point (whether the evaluation is summative or formative) in the following ways:

- **Facilitate communication**
  If the insider/outsider is able to facilitate a consideration of local habits and customs as well as what is unique about the local mentality and socio-cultural values, he or she may enhance and enliven communication with people directly or indirectly involved in the project. Interaction between an external expert and the target population can be facilitated through the collaboration of an *insider* who can help to establish on firm ground a *common language* (concepts, values, assumptions) between the evaluators and all those concerned in the project. In this way, it is possible not only to identify the exact nature of the impact, both present and future, but also to

give meaning to the impact, especially from the perspective of the target population.

- **Solve field-related problems**
  The insider/outsider may help to resolve apparent or real ambiguities, contradictions and misunderstandings in all matters relating to the project, not only between the target team and the evaluator, but also between the target team and other people involved.

- **Contribute to the development of research instruments**
  The insider/outsider can help in the adaptation of instruments used to gather data and relevant information as he or she takes into account local features and the target population.

- **Contextualise findings**
  The insider/outsider can play a role in the reading and interpretation of data in the light of the context of the project and the singularity of local conditions.

- **Contribute to recommendations**
  The insider/outsider can assist in drawing appropriate conclusions and recommendations if he or she bears in mind the local context of the impact study in terms of both objectives and implications.

3.2 Skills necessary for the insider/outsider

It goes without saying that none of these things can be done if the insider/outsider does not have the appropriate skills or is not appropriately equipped to deal with the various problems that may arise. In addition to the mastery of theoretical and practical skills required in the design, implementation and evaluation of educational projects, he or she should first and foremost have a good understanding, not only of the project itself (objectives, stages of implementation, requirements), but especially of its implications in terms of the desired change and the potential impact that such change might have. It is obvious from the above that the insider/outsider needs to fully understand local culture and the way it might affect the impact of the project at different levels – as well as in terms of degrees of involvement. But, most importantly, and in order to maximise objectivity, he or she should not have a stake in the project. If the insider/outsider were to have a stake in the project, it would be inevitable that his or her point of view and whole approach to the evaluation would be, to some extent, biased.

In addition to mastering the communication skills required by the evaluation, an insider/outsider needs quickly to develop a good and productive working relationship with the target population and the external experts. This is all the more important as the quality of evaluation in its different stages depends on it. Not only does he or she need to fulfil the role of an informant and a communication facilitator; he or she also needs to be a full participant evaluator. The combination of insiders and external evaluators can help to uncover aspects of the impact which would not necessarily be highlighted in the type of evaluation generally carried out

solely by external experts or by experts who have a homogenous point of view. This is all the more important because certain crucial decisions are made on the basis of the study.

3 Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing and given the nature of the evaluation enterprise, which seeks to determine the nature and scope of an impact, the role of an insider/outsider can be crucial. In addition to adding a human dimension to the study, he/she may play the role of moderator throughout the various stages of the study, not only as a communication facilitator between the target population and the evaluator/s or researchers, but as an active participant researcher – with no objective other than to enrich the database of the project, to facilitate the correct interpretation of data, and to contribute to drawing insightful and appropriate conclusions.

It may be argued that an external researcher or expert can easily develop the kind of skill and expertise generally brought in by the insider/outsider. Although this may hold true for the few, it is rarely the case for the many. In addition, the exercise may require time and effort (and hence money) which might more profitably be spent on the study itself. In fact, the time and energy which can be saved if one factors in an outsider/insider's contribution may contribute to more productive and meaningful evaluations and swifter completions of impact studies.

44 Impact assessment in educational projects: some perspectives on the 'insider-outsider' debate

Dave Allan
Norwich Institute for Language Education

Dave Allan focuses in his paper on the *insider-outsider* debate. He considers questions like: *Who does the evaluating?* and *Who decides whether the outcomes are to be judged as successful or not?*

His answers to these questions are illuminated by his varied experience in some forty or so countries over a period of twenty years – experiences which have profoundly influenced his views on the debate.

In order to locate his own position in the debate, he draws on four case studies of evaluations which capture a variety of permutations from, on the one hand, being a single outsider researcher to, on the other hand, working with a range of insider-stakeholders.

He illustrates his views by elaborating on his experiences in Bangladesh and in Estonia, where he was required to undertake the evaluation as a single *outside expert*. He uses his experiences in Estonia to show how, in spite of having to work as a single outsider, sustained contact with the project enabled him to become a *de facto* insider.

In the fourth case study he refers to an evaluation undertaken in Morocco where he worked with insiders on a formative evaluation over a sustained period.

Finally, he contrasts the respective advantages and disadvantages of working as a single outsider evaluator and as an evaluator with a team of local experts.

1 Introduction

In this paper prepared for the **DFID Forum on Impact Studies**[1], I wish to draw on my experiences in project evaluation to address the question of *Who does the evaluating?* and then to explore the benefits and disbenefits of participatory approaches to impact studies. The paper is seen as yet another contribution to the *insider-outsider* debate in so far as it elaborates on the relationship between what are sometimes called *national* researchers and *external* researchers.

The terminology we use is, in fact, quite important. Keith Morrow has pointed out, in his paper entitled, *Sustaining Impact: the Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Project*, that our understanding of what *researcher* means will take us a long way towards clarifying a particular view about evaluation and how it may best be carried out in the context of educational projects and programmes. Such a view might immediately predispose us to a belief that specific expertise in the field of research methodology is a prerequisite for effective evaluation. However, my own experience, time and again, has been that some of the most insightful verdicts on the impact of educational projects have come from those who have little or no formal training in evaluation but who do have the ability to reach common-sense conclusions about what they see and hear. Such people are teachers, parents, and, above all, the learners themselves – the students and pupils.

The validity of impact assessment is frequently neither an issue of 'objective truth', nor a consequence of the degree of correspondence with a project framework. It is more likely to depend on whose agenda is being used as a cue in evaluations.

2 Insiders vs. outsiders

One of the more obvious problems that arises when evaluation is carried out solely by an outside expert is the problem of the *culture gap.* Outsiders, for all that they may be experts in the methodology of evaluation and have wide-ranging experience, may quite simply not see and not hear the reality of the outcomes in a field as difficult to measure as education.

The other major problem for the outside expert is quite simply a question of the timescale. Much worthwhile educational change is not measurable over the timescales typical of many recent language education projects, with their cost-conscious focus on short-term measurable outcomes and *sustainability*, let alone by evaluators who are working to deadlines defined in terms of weeks and who have tight budgets. My own experience in Bangladesh was of being asked to come to crucial decisions about a multi-million pound language education project on the basis of a two-week visit tacked on at the end, with an evaluation budget which was a tiny fraction of a percentage of the total sums involved before and after the evaluation.

1 My involvement in the **DFID Forum on Impact Studies** came about not because I have a particular theoretical perspective to support, nor a strong academic background in development issues, but because of my long-term interest in evaluation in relation to language teaching.

The use of *national* and *external* to label apparently opposed (and certainly often juxtaposed) personnel and perspectives can also be misleading, as Keith Morrow (see paper 7.2) and I both well know from our separate and our shared experience of educational project evaluation. Do non-nationals have to be regarded as outsiders? From my experience in Tunisia I wish to argue that non-nationals can be very much *insiders* as far as a particular project is concerned. During my sustained period of work in Tunisia, I was often described as *an honorary Tunisian.* On the other hand, nationals may be perceived as *outsiders* to particular projects or programmes, but fully-fledged *insiders* in terms of language, cultural awareness, access to longer-term perspectives and their ability to interpret tiny clues. These advantages give them the skills to *read between the lines* of the bare statistics. Such was the role played by Mohammed Melouk in Morocco (see paper 4.3), where he was one of a team of three charged with carrying out a major formative evaluation of a long-term curriculum development project which was funded by DFID, with the British Council playing a major management role.

3. Revisiting the *insider-outsider* debate

My own views in the *insider-outsider* debate have been shaped by a number of significantly different experiences over a period of twenty years – a time during which I worked as a teacher-trainer and as a language consultant in some 40 countries. In recent years four of these experiences have stood out. In the sections which follow, I shall elaborate on these experiences to illustrate the differing positions that may be located on an *insider-outsider* continuum.

3.1 Case study: The single outside expert

In both Bangladesh and in Estonia, I was asked to go in as a single outside *expert* to evaluate and make recommendations with regard to national language policy. Before starting in Bangladesh, I was given the opportunity to visit Bangladesh for two weeks since it was a country I had not visited before. My task was to provide an informative report on how successful a Bangladeshi project had been in providing structures and systems to facilitate through the school curriculum the re-introduction of English (a language which, for the previous generation, had been part of their everyday life).

It was necessary for me to focus all my skills and experience, to read every available report and document, and to interview stakeholders as varied as the Education Minister, the heads of examining boards and training colleges, and kids in rural schools. Because I wanted to get it right, I worked long days and I eventually produced a long and detailed report. I really cared about the outcomes and agonised over the recommendations I made, but I never knew if they were the right ones. There were no insiders working with me (apart from those who were my informants) to tell me what they thought, and I have not heard a word from anyone in Bangladesh since I submitted the report.

I have since heard this kind of evaluation described as a FIFO[2] or FIO – Fly In, Fly Out and ... well, you can guess the rest!

3.2 Case study: The single outside expert – but with a sustained role

While what I had experienced in Estonia was similar in some ways to what I had experienced in Bangladesh, it was also very different. Although I was once again chosen to work as a single outside expert in Estonia, I was also asked to act as a consultant on behalf of the Council of Europe in order to review how effectively the National Language Board was developing national language policy. The board's aim was to enshrine and support Estonian as the national language while making effective allowances for the needs and problems of a large Russian-speaking minority.

The problem of citizenship and the requirement for competence in Estonian had generated enormous internal friction and dissent, and were, in addition, viewed as a possible source of destabilisation in Eastern Europe. In fact, as I got off the 'plane, I had Russian and Estonian television interviewers shoving microphones in my face, and asking me for my 'expert verdict' about whether the language level being required for citizenship was too high or too low. I was only too aware at that moment of the limits of my expertise. But I did not have that FIFO feeling in Estonia because my experience in the country was sustained over a longer timescale.

I was able to return regularly to Estonia and to evaluate progress over a period of nearly two and a half years. During that time relationships were built; trust was developed where there had only been suspicion, and even hostility had dissipated. Those who had initially been the objects of the evaluation became in effect collaborative members of a team. We had established a sufficient number of important agreed-upon objectives and our shared concerns helped to bridge the insider-outsider gap. I found that my theoretical expertise, my professional knowledge and my change-management skills proved their value in practice as I worked *with* insiders over a period of time. I had been able to give many of the insiders an *outside* perspective, and this had helped them to assess more accurately, systematically and humanely the impact of the work that they were doing. They in turn enabled me to become *in part* an insider. This really enhanced my ability to evaluate what was happening. The insights gleaned enabled me to understand the complexities of the project rather than to think of it in terms of the simplified images with which I had been initially presented. There are some organisations that worry about their personnel 'going native'.

I now find it difficult, after my experience in Estonia, to imagine how *any* educational project can be properly evaluated, without a proper 'native' perspective.

2 A term coined by Dermot Murphy and Pauline Rea-Dickins (see paper 3.1).

In Morocco I was asked to lead a team of three people – myself and two Moroccans – who were required to make a *formative evaluation* of a major **ELT Curriculum Development Project**. This project had become generally known as *The Item Banking Project* because of the central role played by item-banking in the assessment side of the project. This, in fact, had become the main focus of activity for those involved. Although the evaluation took place over a period of one year and involved three visits by myself (the *outside expert*), it also required continuing work (between my visits) by the two Moroccan members of the team.

The **Item Banking Project** had developed over a period of eight years and had latterly acquired potential significance for the ways in which other subjects might also be assessed in Morocco.

The team chosen to do the formative evaluation[3] was designed to reflect the maximum advantage obtainable from using three individuals with different backgrounds but appropriately complementary expertise. The team included:

- a *full outsider*, the UK *expert* (myself),
- an *insider/outsider* in the sense of being a Moroccan national with awareness of the project and the professional issues involved, but an outsider to the project, and
- one *insider*, a member of the project, an inspector who was the leader of a regional test writing team.

Though there were problems with funding and communication, the team worked well and produced a series of reports which, in my view, represented a much more accurate and balanced assessment of the project's impact than anything that had been produced before. No single agenda could be given precedence because of the make-up of the evaluation team. This meant that difficult issues were addressed in a positive way. The evidence soon made it very clear that a number of benefits had accrued from the way in which the evaluation team had been set up. In the next section I will elaborate on the benefits, along with some caveats.

3 This had been costed into this funding period of the project as a significant phase and with a reasonably realistic budget.

Recently, in Tunisia, I was able to see it all from the other side. **The Secondary ELT Project**, in which I had been involved as the project leader, was evaluated by a team which deliberately included senior members of the inspectorate who were a part of the project working alongside the *outside expert*. This was a project I knew as an *outsider who had become an insider*. It was a situation about which I was passionately concerned, and I wanted those who were evaluating to have the necessary professional awareness to assess the project's impact across a wide range of outcomes (some of these outcomes were accounted for in the project framework while other outcomes – some of them, very important indeed – were entirely unanticipated). What was clear, and gratifying, was that the presence of the *insiders* allowed issues to be raised which might otherwise have been missed. This consolidated the continuation of a crucial sense of ownership on the part of those who would soon be solely responsible for future success or failure of the project. One cannot speak of sustainability if the long-term stakeholders do not have a major say in the assessment of impact.

4 Contrasting insiders and outsiders

So what generalisable conclusions may one draw from these different experiences? (Whether or not what follows has a wider application is something you will have to decide for yourself on the basis of your own experience and your awareness of the experience of others.) What can *outsiders* and *insiders* respectively bring to the evaluation of educational projects and programmes?

5 Conclusion

It will be clear from what I have said that most of my experience leads me to favour a team or collaborative approach to impact assessment in language education projects and programmes. What, then, is the distinctive contribution that a team may make – if one compares it to the contribution that may be made by an individual (whether insider or outsider)? The following advantages (in no order of significance) seem to characterise the use of teams rather than individuals in educational project evaluation:

- Teams collectively gather more and more varied expertise and experience.
- Teams have the ability to multi-task.
- Teams can to cope with unavailability caused, for example, by illness.
- Teams have the potential to reduce the effects of prejudice.
- Teams can offer a wider range of evaluation perspectives.
- Members of teams can be mutually supportive.
- Teams offer opportunities for regular interactive reflection and analysis.
- Teams can engage in cross-checking and ongoing articulated critical analysis.

INSIDERS VS. OUTSIDERS

Strengths

If well chosen, an outside expert will bring:

- specific, relevant professional expertise and experience
- a wide range of perspectives (not just *local* ones)
- the ability to see the *big picture*
- the potential to be an open-minded, unbiased listener and observer
- the potential to be committed but dispassionate
- the potential to arrive at non-partisan judgements
- the ability to ask difficult but important questions
- the power and authority of an outside expert
- a clear focal point for communication
- only one set of potentially conflicting workloads

An *insider* can potentially bring:

- a high level access to the *local* languages
- national/regional/local cultural awareness
- an extensive awareness of the environment
- a sense of history, and when it matters
- a knowledge of which doors to knock on
- the influence/authority to open doors
- the ability to detect/identify smokescreens
- a knowledge of *local* vested interest
- a sensitive 'bullshit' detector
- an ability to see project goals as a *recipient*
- a long-term perspective – outsiders go away!

Weaknesses

But s/he will inevitably lack:

- all the *plus* factors of a team (and a team may comprise two or more members)
- an in-depth awareness of the *local* culture
- local contacts who could be sources of influence and access
- language proficiency at the required/ideal level (in most cases)
- the ability to really understand what is going on

But there are significant disadvantages and dangers:

- The *insider* is always vulnerable to local pressures.
- The *insider* may be a part of the *vested interest*.
- The *insider* may have a personal axe to grind.
- The *insider* may be unable to see the big picture.
- The *insider* may lack the authority of an *outsider*.

- Teams may have the ability to cope better with unexpected events.
- Teams cost more but often provide better value for money.
- Teams create more potential for communication problems.
- Teams are more likely to be become embroiled in time-wasting internal disputes.
- Teams need to allocate time for communication and liaison.
- Teams need to be managed and so require leadership.
- There are more likely to be workload and prioritisation problems in teams.

All of the above factors will affect teams in varying degrees. Teams are also affected by differences in national and institutional contexts, individuals and composition. But if there are any messages which stand out as having very wide applicability, they are the following:

- Teams are more effective than individuals.
- The best teams are characterised by carefully selected complementary expertise and awareness.
- Insider/outsider combinations can be very effective.
- Impact assessment needs to be planned in from the very start – and not 'tacked on'.
- Effective impact assessment requires adequate time and funding.

I hope that this sharing of parts of my experience and my reflection will provide some food for thought.

5

TRAINING TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

5.1 Helping teachers to develop competence criteria for evaluating their professional development

Alan Peacock

5.2 Combining the teaching of research methods with an assessment of project impact

Elijah Sekgobela

51 Helping teachers to develop competence criteria for evaluating their professional development

Alan Peacock
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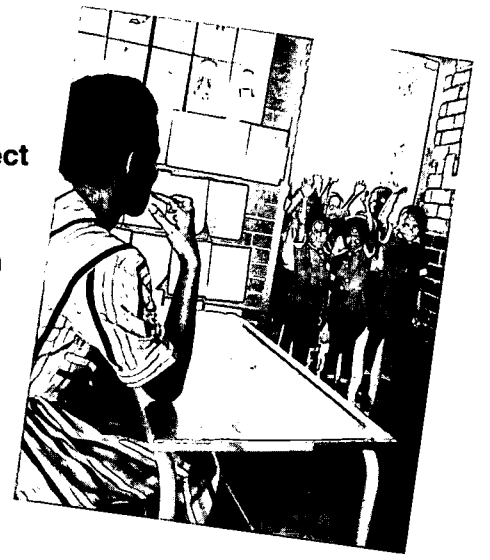
Alan Peacock's paper discusses ways of helping teachers to develop competence criteria for evaluating their professional development. He discusses interventions in South Africa and Sri Lanka in which teachers collaboratively developed competence criteria for evaluating their professional development and improving their performance. He elucidates various stages of the process through which detailed sets of criteria are developed. In the final stage outlined in this paper, he shows how the training is put to practice in their classroom situation. He argues that the reflection underlying this process enabled teachers to become aware of the need to establish levels of achievement in any given skill area. In practice this means that teachers are given the responsibility to develop their own competence, and this has a number of positive spin-offs for teaching practice. The paper includes details about teaching and skills indicators which have been developed by teachers, as well as an observation schedule which is used for monitoring the progress of teaching.

1 Introduction

The paper draws from our experience in three current projects which are supported by the University of Exeter School of Education. These are:



- The **Primary Science Programme** in Madadeni District, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa[1]
- The **Sri Pada College of Education Project** in Sri Lanka[2]
- The **Limpopo School Empowerment Project**, in the Tshakuma District, Northern Province, South Africa[3]

In each of the above projects, the primary aim was to enhance the capacity of teachers (or teacher trainers) to evaluate their performance through the development of criteria of effectiveness or competence. The underlying rationale for participation in each of the three projects relates to notions of transfer of responsibility, empowerment, collaboration, relevance and communicative effectiveness (Fullan 1989; Dalin 1994; Shaeffer 1994; Good & Brophy 1995; Showers & Joyce 1996). Over the past seven years, Exeter in partnership with local teachers, developed sets of criteria of teaching competence.

The criteria which we developed collaboratively reflect teachers' competencies in the following areas:

- Planning
- Communicating
- Managing
- Evaluating

Detailed criteria, calibrated into four levels of competencies, were generated for each of the above-mentioned areas. The four levels of competence coincide with the four stages of the initial training of teachers. The following is a summary of *The Dimensions of Teaching* from the University of Exeter (1997).

1 Implementation: Primary School Programme
2 Implementation: GTZ
3 Implementation: Link Community Development

The Dimensions of Teaching

Dimension	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Planning	**Plan episodes for a group showing** ● aims for learning ● organisation ● relevant subject knowledge ● teacher's role ● resources.	**Plan lessons for a class, showing** ● clear, appropriate aims and expectations for learning ● appropriate subject matter knowledge, related to the National Curriculum (NC) programmes of study ● means of differentiation ● practical organisation for teaching and learning ● deployment of resources	**Plan a short programme of work for a class, showing:** ● clear objectives and content which is appropriate to the subject and the pupils ● interesting and challenging tasks, including homework where appropriate ● clear targets, building on prior attainment (by using assessment data) ● clear differentiation, with identification of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN). ● attention to cross-curricular skills, and pupils' broader development ● an appropriate use of the whole class group and individual teaching ● detailed attention to own progress as a teacher.	**Plan schemes of work for a class, showing:** ● a balanced development of children's knowledge, understanding and skills ● assessment strategies ● imaginative activities and resources ● a clear relation to developing class ethos ● attention to own developing practice.
Communicating (a) Demonstration and instruction	● Attract children's interest and attention. ● Give clear, audible instructions. ● Inform, describe and explain.	● Sustain children's attention. ● Demonstrate skills and processes clearly. ● Inform, describe & explain with clarity and coherence. ● Ask questions to focus attention. ● Convey interest and enthusiasm. ● Adapt instruction to pupils' understanding and engagement.	● Ensure engagement and participation with good pacing of lessons. ● Demonstrate with clear commentary. ● Show good awareness of audience. Summarise clearly and concisely, emphasising key ideas. ● Use effective questioning to ensure participation. ● Use appropriate vocabulary.	● Choose concepts and examples strategically (with a deep knowledge of subject matter and children's interests and understanding in mind). ● Communicate so as to inspire pupils' interest in subject.
(b) Interaction	● Engage in interaction. ● Listen and respond sympathetically. ● Check understanding via questions.	Interact and question so as to: ● listen carefully to pupils ● focus pupils' ideas ● sustain their thinking ● prompt them to check errors ● respond to individual differences	Mediate learning through discussions so as to: ● help to remedy pupils' misconceptions ● stimulate intellectual curiosity ● explore ideas, giving attention to pupils' broader development ● prompt reasoning and argument ● relate learning to authentic and work-related examples.	● Foster democratic procedures and rational discussion. ● Chair discussions effectively whilst remaining neutral. ● Show sensitivity and judgement about contentious issues. ● Defend individuals from unfair peer pressures.

The Dimensions of Teaching

Dimension	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
(c) Facilitation	• Monitor practice tasks, checking accuracy and providing help.	Initiate some independent practice and problem-solving. • Provide feedback to support independent learning. • Exploit opportunities to improve basic skills and study skills.	• Encourage some autonomy in pupil choices of the means or ends of learning. • Facilitate knowledge use in pupil-led investigation. • Facilitate pupils' individual and collaborative study skills.	• Promote authentic activities and the development of autonomous learning. • Facilitate pupils' independent attempts at research.
Managing (a) Managing order	• Operate established procedures for order with a group. • Attempt to sustain purposeful work. • Deal with minor misbehaviours.	• Communicate assertively to gain attention. • Maintain a good working atmosphere. • Operate a framework of rules consistently. • Give due attention to issues of safety and pupil welfare. • Signal and manage transitions effectively. • Draw on support where appropriate.	• Manage and sustain a flow of work and activities effectively. • Detect problems of order early meet them with firmness. • Set and maintain agreed rules and values. • Set high expectations for pupils' behaviour. • Attempt to assimilate difficult children.	• Maintain and improve order by purposeful work and shared values. • Involve children appropriately in taking responsibility. • Work systematically with difficult children to improve their learning and adjustment to life in school.
(b) Managing resources	• Provide and manage materials for a group. • Display work (after advice). • Organise tidying of the classroom.	• Provide appropriate resources for lessons. • Manage the distribution and collection of materials effectively. • Display pupils' work effectively. • Ensure care of resources and safe environment. • Arrange appropriate seating. • Make use of visual aids. • Make effective use of time.	• Select and make good use of textbooks, IT and other learning resources. • Work on improving the learning environment. • Use displays to stimulate learning. • Manage own and pupils use of time effectively. • Use adult assistants effectively.	• Develop and experiment with new resources. • Design, produce and use novel curriculum materials. • Sustain long-term resourcing for class, or subject. • Encourage pupils to manage resources independently. • Develop the effectiveness of adult assistants.
Evaluating	• Show awareness of children's engagement in work. • Mark children's work (with advice). • Write summary evaluations of episodes of teaching.	• Assess work in relation to objectives and NC (with help). • Use observation and questioning to assess understanding. • Diagnose problems and provide feedback. • Relate assessment to future planning and teaching. • Keep records of pupils' work. • Write evaluations using, for example, agendas, conferences and university-based work.	• Use a variety of formal and informal assessment techniques. • Mark and monitor pupils' class and homework. • Provide constructive feedback and set targets. • Assess and record each pupil's progress systematically, using NC levels, school records and comparative data to inform planning and teaching. • Be familiar with statutory assessment and reporting requirements. • Know how to prepare and present reports to parents. • Identify and assess SEN in line with relevant codes of practice. • Demonstrate awareness of own development as a teacher.	• Consider alternative analyses of teaching and learning. • Assess pupils' progress critically and effectively. • Take part in staff development programmes. • Undertake research into own professional practice. • Develop own theoretical and practical ideas.

2 Stages in developing competence criteria

The process through which the *The Dimensions of Teaching* went was a lengthy one and it took several years and numerous trial versions before a *pro forma* which satisfied all partners in the process was agreed upon.[4] In each case, teachers participated in the generation of the criteria. They engaged in a process which was characterised by the following four stages:

1 **Identification**

Participants identified their perceived needs or the competencies which related to their required roles. The participants in this stage included teachers, teacher trainers, and leader teachers.

2 **Categorisation**

Participants categorised or classified identified criteria for evaluation under specific category headings.

3 **Revision**

Participants refined criteria in order to ensure that they would be utilisable when incorporated into the instrument or working tool. This is done by

- making statements *operationalisable*
- identifying *relevant evidence*
- categorising and *establishing levels* of competence.

4 **Utilisation**

Participants evaluated tools within an ongoing programme of classroom support.

4 As a result of the lengthy time period it was necessary that certain adaptations were to be made when we attempted to *build in* teachers' thinking about competences to the much shorter programmes of professional development that characterised the three projects.

The first three stages of this process of development are conducted in the early stages of a project, usually during workshop sessions in which all teachers, trainers and leader teachers participate. We realised that it would be far more cost effective for us merely to present the Exeter *Dimensions of teaching* as a model or template. If we had done that we could have (by eliminating the first three stages) shortened the time which teachers need to generate their own criteria. While this would certainly have allowed Exeter to capitalise on the effort and expense which went into their original development, it would not have permitted teachers to generate (and therefore 'own') those competencies which are relevant to their own distinctive cultural/pedagogical contexts. The 'handing down' of externally developed criteria would deny teachers the opportunity to participate in the stages which are necessary for their own professional development. In fact, we believe that the process of defining notions of effective teaching (stage 1) and the consequential collaborative development of the competence criteria (stages 2 and 3) are crucial stages for enabling teachers' professional development. The only role that project leaders or consultants should play in these initial phases is one involving the facilitation and scaffolding of workshop processes (Tharp 1993; Good & Brophy 1995).

21 Stage 1: Initiation of the process of identifying competencies

The following list describes four ways of initiating the process of identification of competencies in stage 1:

- Teachers can initially be asked questions like *What is literacy? What is science? How can you build onto pupils experiences? What makes a good teacher of mathematics?*

- Facilitators can provide examples of good classroom practice by using, for example, a video recording of lessons drawn from a range of specific teaching subjects and then requesting the group to analyse what they see and then discuss issues like *What is the teacher doing that is effective?*

- Teachers can share and analyse their school policy documents in an attempt to identify where there may be consensus about characteristics of effective teaching. They could be asked to think about questions like (for example) *What is important about monitoring pupils work?*

- In subsequent sessions, teachers can be asked to identify changes in their practice which have been inspired by input from earlier workshops and support. They can be asked to expand their understanding of good practice by extending their newly acquired understanding to their own subject areas and classroom contexts. Thus, for example, they might be asked *How can group discussions be used in the teaching of science?*

2.1.1 Participants' responses to the question *What do student teachers in Year 1 need when they first go into school?*

	WHAT?	WHY?
1	professional commitment	knowledge, attitudes, skills depend on this
2.	how to know pupils needs	always necessary for teachers (relevance and motivation)
3.	subject knowledge	teachers have to know the requirements of the syllabus
4.	communication skills	to give guidelines to pupils for presentation, description, summarising
5.	how to choose learning and teaching materials suitable for pupils	so they have pupils' attention
6.	punctuality	for organisation
7.	flexibility	to be adaptable
8.	learning to learn	for innovation
9.	cooperative working skills	to learn from each other
10.	self-awareness and confidence	important for the teaching process
11.	how to work modern technology	to protect those technologies
12.	knowledge, skills and attitude	to perform teacher's tasks well, to understand learners
13.	how to make a lesson plan	better teaching and learning
14.	make resources for teaching and learning	according to methods and techniques (process)
15.	about intervention, communication and management	to get pupil attention, motivation and reinforcement
16.	summarising	to bring out main points

WHAT?	WHY?
17. knowledge about assessment and evaluation	to motivate pupils and give feedback
18. planning abilities (management)	to prepare a proper plan for teaching and learning
19. ability to identify the pupils' needs	to improve their hidden talent
20. techniques of effective learning	to achieve effectiveness and efficiency
21. ability to create teaching and learning aids	to get interest of children, to get attention, to motivate, etc.
22. ability to assess and evaluate successfully	to identify the levels of competence of pupils
23. questioning ability	to implement learning
24. ability to build good interactions	to implement pleasant atmosphere
25. communication skills	to explain, inform, persuade, etc.
26. counselling and guiding abilities	to help pupils with difficulties and to develop their personalities

Source: Sri Pada College of Education Report

The following tables emerged from the second and third stages respectively. They were stages in the in the development of criteria by staff of the Sri Pada College, Sri Lanka.

2.2 Stage 2: Participants categorisation of needs into suggested Professional Skill Indicators

Communication

Ability to build good interaction

Indicator

1. Climate of the classroom
2. Two-way communication
3. Active learning process

Evidence

- Democratic classroom situation
- Interaction between teacher-pupil (t/p) and pupil-pupil (p/p)
- Cooperative learning process
- Good responses of pupils and teachers
- Looking at the activities in the lesson plan

Assessment

Ability to assess and evaluate successfully

Indicator

1. Achievement level of the pupil
2. Difficulties which pupils have in reaching main objectives
3. Various patterns of assessment

Evidence

- Through classroom activities, the student teacher can see different levels of pupils' achievements.
- Most of students could not reach aspiration levels according to the student teacher's teaching processes.
- There are suitable patterns to assess for each lesson.

Management

Ability to use techniques of effective learning

Indicator

1. Careful timing
2. Good use of space
3. Good use of resources

Evidence

- Seeing whether the student teacher comes and return to class on time
- Seeing whether the student teacher completes work on time
- Seeing whether the student teacher uses space in a proper way
- Seeing whether the student teacher uses sufficient resources
- Seeing whether the student teacher uses resources that are suitable for the pupils
- Seeing whether the student teacher has ideas about conservation of resources
- Seeing whether the student teacher uses all the resources that have been collected

Planning

Ability to write a lesson plan

Indicator

1. Selecting objectives
2. Activities relevant to the objectives

Evidence

- The main points can be pulled out from the summary.
- Can observe from the questions through the lesson and at the end of the lesson
- Observe the process going on through the lesson.

2.3 Stage 3: Revision of the working document on Professional Skill Indicators: levels for Year 1 and Year 2

Communication: Year 1

Ability to build good interaction

Indicators

1. Climate of the classroom
2. Two-way communication
3. Active learning process
4. Democratic classroom situation

Evidence

- Interaction between teacher and pupil
- Cooperative learning processes
- Good responses of pupils and teacher that cater for individual differences
- Look at the activities in the lesson plan

Communication: Year 2

Cooperative Working Skills

Indicators

1. Good interaction between pupils and student teacher
2. Two-way communication

Evidence

- Pupils are working in a happy mood.
- Pupils have enough opportunity to ask questions.
- Student teacher responds to the pupils adequately.
- Pupils help each other and work in a friendly manner.
- They listen to each other attentively.
- Summarise the lesson by discussion.

Resources: Year 2

Ability to make teaching and learning aids.

Indicators

1. The student teacher selects appropriate resources for the lesson.
2. The student teacher makes relevant resources with minimum cost.
3. The student teacher makes resources creatively.
4. The teaching aids are used at the appropriate time in the lesson.

Evidence

- Look at the lesson plan objectives.
- Have the visual aids been prepared according to the objectives?
- Observe whether the resources help to motivate pupils to be active.
- Check whether these resources are made with available materials at low cost.
- Talk to the student teacher to find out how they were made.
- Check whether resources are traditional or of original design.
- Observe whether the resources help to develop the pupils' creativity.
- Check whether the student teacher uses resources at appropriate times.

Resources: Year 2

Ability to choose teaching materials

Indicators

1. Ability to use teaching and learning materials in an appropriate way in order to develop understanding of the concepts
2. Opportunities for pupils to handle teaching and learning materials

Evidence

- During and at the end of the lesson, teacher uses the resources to support achievement of the objectives.
- Pupils actively involved

Personal Qualities: Year 1 **Ability to manage time** **Indicators** 1. Whether the student teacher prepares the lesson plan in advance 2. Whether the student teacher arrives and departs on time 3. Whether the student teacher conducts the lesson as planned 4. Whether the student teacher allocates appropriate time to the different sections of the lesson, e.g. setting scene, presentation of the subject matter, summary, evaluation, feedback to pupils 5. Student teacher communicates well 6. Student teacher should have good physical appearance.	Evidence • Observe lesson plan at start of lesson. • Lecturers' observation of student punctuality • Ask student's opinion. *What do you think? Could you organise this in another way?* • Observation throughout the lesson • Knows pupil's names. The pupils can interact with the teacher and other pupils. • Do the pupils respect the student teacher?
Personal Qualities: Year 2 **Professional Commitment** **Indicators** 1. Subject matter gathered from various sources 2. Time management 3. Awareness of the class 4. Remedial teaching	Evidence • Library reference • Consulting tutors • Preparing appropriate teaching and learning aids • Using the above • Arriving and leaving punctually • Management of the learning strategies • Pupils' actions and thinking • Ways of addressing pupils • Varying responses to individuals • Attention to the potential of pupils (assignments, questioning, etc.)

Source: Sri Pada College of education Project (pp. 1 and 2)

As was indicated earlier, the value of teacher participation in generating performance criteria such as those emerging from the first three stages of the intervention is immense and cannot replicated by the handing over of criteria by those who are external to the programme. On the contrary, it is contended that the handing over of criteria would further deskill teachers and induce them to become dependent on external consultants. This, we believe, would lead to loss of motivation among teachers and to the ascription of *celebrity status* to external consultants.

The key aspect of this process is the commitment to the criteria generated in the above stages. It is at this stage, that teachers are expected to apply the criteria to their own teaching contexts. This emphasis on class-based practice is crucial to reinforcing understandings of the criteria and to ensuring that teachers are able to make the link between theory and practice. Various studies have provided evidence that workshops (i.e. stages 1 to 3) alone do not have an impact on professional development (see, for example, Harvey 1997) and that supported application in the classroom is required (Beeby 1986). It is thus essential that both the teachers and those providing classroom support be committed to the criteria on which their professional development is being based and evaluated.

Providing effective and ongoing classroom support requires that those who will carry out the support function are themselves competent. Managing support on a large scale and over a sustained period of time can be labour-intensive and therefore expensive. Too frequently, cohorts of mentors/ advisory teachers/leader teachers are trained a high cost but then become lost to the system through inadequate support (Peacock & Morakaladi 1995). The following two strategies for dealing with this were developed within the **Limpopo School Empowerment Project (LSEP)**.

- **Locating support teams within the training centre**
  The first is to train the Professional Development Team (a group of former initial training tutors based within the Ramaano Bulaheni Training Centre where the project is based) simultaneously with the Leader Teacher training programme. This means that both classroom practitioners and the Professional Development Team are trained as leader teachers for their school/cluster. They were all initially trained together on the same workshop programme, and were all collaboratively engaged in the process of developing criteria. In practice this means that, as collaborators, they now all share a commitment to a common way of supporting and evaluating performance.

- **Providing cost-effective classroom support**
  The second way of approaching the need for sustained support is to use trainee teachers from the University of Exeter School of Education in a dual role of supplying *cover teaching* and classroom support for the leader teachers. A pilot programme in KwaZulu Natal (Link Community Development 1996) demonstrated that second-year primary trainees with two extended periods of school experience were adequately prepared to *cover* for teachers and to provide effective classroom support. Hence in the first year of the Limpopo School Empowerment Project, 10 students spent eight weeks in Northern Province *cover teaching* in the leader teachers' classes in 10 primary schools whilst the leader teachers themselves attended workshops. Subsequently, students modelled such activities as conferencing (observing each other teacher and undergoing a structured critique of the lesson afterwards) and alternative strategies for behaviour management – all of which proved to be a powerful tool for teacher development.

3 The outcomes of the teacher development process

We wish to emphasise some of the most important outcomes of this process in all three projects.

- The evidence from this programme provisionally indicates that teachers needed time and support to discuss and question their underlying pedagogical and epistemological assumptions about the process – but that this process was essential.

- The competence statements underwent various stages of revision. After initial reluctance, leader teachers became committed to this process. Thus, for example, when specific professional skills were highlighted, teachers practised evaluating these in their lessons according to the chosen indicators.

- Teachers also became aware in practice of the need to establish levels of achievement in any given skill area in order to evaluate progress and set targets (Hatton & Smith 1995). It was apparent that professional development programmes need to be phased and explicitly matched to the varying levels of development of participants.

- The **LSEP** will be developed over three years, and progression will be built into the workshop programme in each of the successive years.

- Giving teachers responsibility for developing their own competence criteria generates trust and confidence, and this gradually leads to supportive critical analysis in the school rather than conventional complementarity.

- A crucial element in this equation was the high esteem with which teachers regarded the Exeter students, who demonstrated that the criteria (relating to, for example, group work and to the use of materials) were achievable even within very large classes and under inauspicious circumstances (Link Community Development 1998).

- The simultaneous process of work-shopping and classroom support also prepares teachers for their roles as mentors (or leader teachers) in schools. This provided the added benefit of providing cost-effective classroom support in the medium and long term.

4 Conclusion

Our experience in the Exeter programme, as outlined in this paper, lends support to our assumption that teachers respond well to such interventions. We recognise, however, that the process for the development of teachers as effective evaluators of teaching competence takes time and relies on the development of their confidence. This requires funding which will sustain the progress until such programmes are institutionalised. The need to train mentors or leader teachers is an ongoing one. There is constant attrition

and hence the constant need to replace those who have moved on or who have progressed to other areas. There is also a constant need to refine and improve teacher performance. We do not believe that short-term programmes which focus on a few schools are likely to reach the critical stage beyond which the institutionalisation of such a development process becomes established.

5.2 Combining the teaching of research methods with an assessment of project impact

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The University of South Africa (Unisa) is a distance teaching institution in Pretoria, South Africa, which offers hundreds of courses each year to more than a hundred thousand students. In 1995, Unisa initiated a training course for educators who would work in the areas of adult base education and training (ABET) and more especially in the areas of literacy, English Second language teaching and skills training. The newly developed programme endeavours to train adult educators with a *developmental consciousness* and, as such, includes a large component on community development and research methods. But, as with all distance education programmes, the ABET Institute has had to devise ways of teaching research methods by getting students practically involved in research design, planning, field work and analysis.

In 1997, ABET decided to teach students in one of the DFID-funded provinces to do research and to get them to undertake part of the evaluation of the project in that province. Elijah Sekgobela of Unisa's Institute for Adult Basic Education and Training undertook to carry out this activity. In this paper, he outlines the implementation of a process of *participatory assessment of impact*, in which students were expected to participate in all spheres of the research process – from the initial conceptualisation to the final recording of data. This paper discusses the process and the benefits derived therefrom.

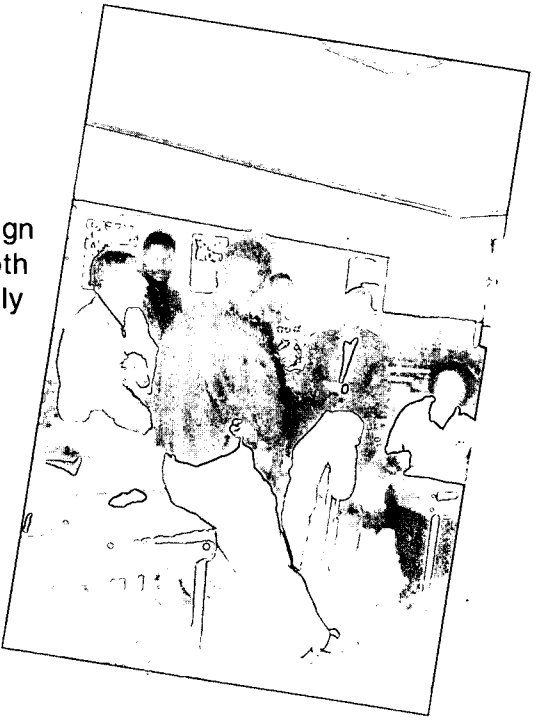
1 Introduction

In 1997, the Unisa ABET Institute undertook an internal impact assessment as part of its teaching programme. The purpose of the assessment was two-fold:

- The first purpose of the assessment was to teach Unisa ABET students to do research by using a *hands on* approach. The experience thus gained would enable the students involved to become competent in the formulation of a research design, the selection of appropriate methods, the necessary fieldwork, the analyses of data and the compilation of a report – thus fulfilling certain curriculum requirements of the ABET course.

- The second purpose of the study was to assess the impact of Unisa **ABET's** educator training programme in the Northern Province in South Africa. This particular province was chosen to pilot the *hands on* training for the following reasons:

  - It one of the poorest provinces in South Africa and is earmarked for *intensive care* programmes of all kinds.
  - The **ABET Institute** is DFID-funded – and the Northern Province is one of its three priority provinces.
  - Because the **ABET Institute** has already done a substantial amount of work in this province, it had become necessary (formatively) to gain some sense of the impact which the institute's work had made.
  - Because the **ABET Institute** works closely with the Provincial Education Department in this province, it was felt that the information gathered would be useful to government and also that it would also enhance the capacity of those government officials participating in the assessment exercise.



2 Methodology

Since it was necessary to formulate a design for the programme that would be both educative and participatory, a decidedly participatory approach was adopted.

21 Research design

The research investigation was designed to explore the ABET students' understanding of what ABET is in terms of their own practice. This question *What is ABET?* was intended to capture their ideas of how this particular Unisa

programme impacts (and ought to impact) on the province. The students were also expected to answer the question *How can ABET delivery in the Northern Province be improved?* – and it was expected that the data from this question would allow ABET to deduce a significant number of formative recommendations.

The investigation/training utilised a mix of workshops and self-completion questionnaires which were designed to elicit what the students themselves really thought about the issues involved. The questionnaires which were drawn up were based on the themes and issues which had been raised in the exploratory workshops. The students were then able to see how the issues they identified became operationalisable *before their very eyes* – so to speak. After the data has been collected, ABET arranged a second round of research/capacity building workshops. In these workshops the participating students interpreted the data and (lastly) wrote up of the findings in a report. Thus they were able to see at first hand how the data they had obtained were integrated into the report.

2.2 Workshops as a qualitative research approach as well as a teaching approach

Two rounds of six workshops were held in the Northern Province (two in each of the six provincial regions based at centres the Thohoyandou, Giyani, Nebo, Tzaneen, Pietersburg and Potgietersrus ABET centres). These areas are predominantly rural and very poor and have minimal capacity. They are also government regions for education delivery.

In the first round, the trainers/evaluators ran an intensive two-day research exercise which was divided into two sessions. These sessions were designed to elicit information from the practitioners in the workshop and to build research capacity by training ABET students and practitioners in the fundamentals of research. The workshop sessions generated both in-depth information for the research analysis and interpretation and themes and issues which were later made operationalisable in the questionnaires. The ABET students/practitioners were thus involved in questionnaire construction from the very beginning.

2.3 Fieldwork as a learning experience

After being trained in research protocol, the students were expected to do the fieldwork by using the instrument which they had collaboratively designed. This period of fieldwork was followed some weeks later by a second round of workshops. In the second round the workshops focused on building capacity in research interpretation and report writing. The research findings were presented and discussed[1] with the ABET students/ practitioners. They were expected to analyse the data under the supervision of the workshop coordinators.

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1 The academics involved in the training had already undertaken statistical analysis of the questionnaires and this data was presented to the students for them to interpret the findings and to suggest recommendations.

2.3 Questionnaires

The students/practitioners were helped to design questionnaires which could be used to obtain information from a variety of interest groups in the field of ABET training. Generally, the interest groups are:

- practitioners or educators
- officials from the education department
- learners who attend classes
- broader community.

It was decided to construct a different questionnaire for each interest group. The questionnaires comprised a balance between closed and open-ended questions, which allowed for the volunteering of information by the interviewees. The training in question construction fulfilled a major part of the *Research Methods* course curriculum in which our students are required to demonstrate competence.

2.4 Sample

The sample selected to attend the workshop was drawn from the Unisa **ABET Institute's** database of ABET students enrolled for the course by the provincial department of education. (Because we felt it necessary to build capacity around this issue in the Northern Province, we also selected those practitioners who had previously completed the ABET course.) We were aware even at the time of selection that our method of selecting the sample was neither scientifically rigorous nor yielding of a representative sample, but since our aim was primarily to build capacity and then to assess impact, we were more or less satisfied (with certain reservations) with the *ad hoc* sample which we assembled. Our crude *sampling* approach gave rise to a very large sample of respondents. But it also enabled us to gather data from an even larger constituency because each student/researcher, as part of his/her fieldwork training exercise, was required to complete up to 10 questionnaires in two of the designated areas of investigation.

3 Doing research: a step-by-step programme

3.1 Participatory research

The outline of the workshop programme was as follows:

- Introduction: Building research capacity by doing research
- Plenary: *What is ABET?*
- Breakaway discussion groups: Explore topics in detail.
- Plenary: *How can we improve ABET?*
- Breakaway discussion groups: Explore topics in detail.
- Individual session: *What I like/dislike most about ABET?*
- Conclusion

In the first round of regional workshops, each workshop commenced with a plenary session which posed the questions: *What is ABET?* (morning session) and *How to improve ABET?*(afternoon session). These sessions took the form of a plenary group discussion facilitated by the Unisa ABET co-ordinators[2] who are locals from the province. Each focus group interrogated the two topics and their comments were written down in the order in which they arose, on a flip chart. The initial plenary was intended to enable the participants to brainstorm and to reflect on their situations. Once the plenary group had exhausted its initial response to the questions posed, the workshop broke-up into smaller breakaway groups to discuss a different selection of the responses. These groups were run by the students/ practitioners themselves who were tasked with making an in-depth analysis of the ideas from the brainstorm session. By way of teaching qualitative methods, the students/researchers' attention was drawn to the experience of a focus group activity and to other qualitative approaches. They were required to reflect on their own experience of the focus groups and also to think about the advantages and disadvantages of using this as a research approach.

The breakaway focus group discussions reflected on and contextualised the points from the plenary sessions. The numbered order of points raised in the plenary sessions were kept so that the additional comments of these ideas, by the breakaway focus groups, could be observed. Their interrogation of the points identified in the brainstorm activity demonstrated the depth and range of opinions of the ABET practitioners on ABET and how ABET is expected to be a vehicle in the new South Africa.

311 Formulating a questionnaire

The breakaway groups, by thinking through plenary workshops, created a detailed theoretical framework of the issues so that an investigation into ABET by utilising a questionnaire. The issues which emerged and were to form the basis of questionnaire construction where the group was required to formulate questions pertaining to the broad themes as indicated below.

What is ABET?

- Teaching methodology
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Second language skills
- Life skills
- Business skills
- Parenting
- Community building
- New South Africa

How to improve ABET?

- Government inputs
- Teaching methodology
- Training methodology
- Business skills
- Problem of time
- Capacity building

2 These co-ordinators are employed on a contract basis for the Unisa ABET Institute. In this province, most co-ordinators are employed in a full time capacity as government officials in the Provincial education department. The evaluation exercise targeted them specifically in an endeavour to build provincial capacity but also to enable interventions to be made via the recommendations of the research exercise.

From the discussions, the students had gained a sense of the following:

- How to compile a questionnaire
- How to do field work
- What is data capturing?[3]
- How to analyse data
- Report writing
- Report-rewrite (by the co-ordinators)
- Presentation of report

The ABET students/researchers were fully involved in each of the above steps, with explanations given by the co-ordinators why things were done in a particular way. In addition, the students/researchers were provided with notes which they could use during the fieldwork and later as a source of reference.

4 Conclusion

The programme achieved its aims. It gathered evidence about the impact of the **ABET programme** in the Northern Province and it also achieved its aims insofar as the development of local capacity. However, as with all research exercises included in this publication, the research project also had its downside - but this is the substance of another paper.

3 Although the data processing was done by the University, the students nevertheless needed to gain a sense of this process.

6

TOPICALITY VS SUSTAINABILITY

6.1 A consideration of project assessment: topicality vs sustainability

Jeff Samuelson, Sarah Harrity

6.2 Topicality vs. sustainability in the evaluation of the South African Book Aid Project

Cleaver Ota

61 A consideration of project assessment: topicality vs sustainability

Jeff Samuelson
Book Aid International

Sarah Harrity
Book Aid International

Jeff Samuelson and Sarah Harrity of Book Aid International (BAI) consider the debate between topicality and sustainability. In this paper, they answer the two following questions of *What outcomes do we consider when assessing impact?* and, *Does the assessment of outcomes address issues of topicality or of sustainability?*

In answering these questions, they draw on two projects with which Book Aid International (BAI) is associated. The Malawi National Library Service (MNLS) which was charged with the responsibility for developing an AIDS awareness campaign and the **South Africa Books Aid Project (SABAP)**, the aim of which was to support local initiatives to improve the quality of basic education. The authors use the above two cases to illustrate the complexity of deciding whether the assessment of outcomes addresses issues of topicality or of sustainability. They caution that the distinction is complex.

The paper agues that the evaluations of the above projects focused more on *outputs* and hence gave scant regard for questions of sustainability. They distinguish between *outputs* and *sustainability* by arguing that outputs refer to the *specific achievements* which the project design was *supposed to guarantee* whereas impact refers to the long term effects of the project.

The paper concludes with some lessons learned from the aforementioned assessments.

1 Introduction

Book Aid International is an NGO based in the North with no overseas offices but with strong links with a wide variety of educational institutions, organisations and associations in the South. Book Aid International (BAI) works in partnership with these organisations, predominantly in sub-Saharan Africa, to support literacy, education, training and publishing, by providing books and other reading materials – which help people to realise their potential and to contribute to the development of their societies.

As part of its core programmes of book provision, BAI also manages a number of projects. Brief reference will be made here to two cases which will be used later to illustrate the points under discussion.

The first example, of a project now completed, concerns the purchase and subsequent distribution in 14 countries in Africa, of a booklet entitled *Living with AIDS in the Community*. The text was written by The Aids Support Organisation (TASO) in Uganda and was published by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The idea for this project originated with the Malawi National Library Service which was charged with the responsibility for developing an AIDS awareness campaign in Malawi through the network of libraries. The Director of the Library Service asked BAI, a long-standing partner, if it could provide appropriate materials and the project began to take shape when it rapidly became apparent that the materials produced in Britain would not be appropriate for Africa.

The second example which will be drawn upon in this paper is another project in which Book Aid International is a player, namely the South Africa Books Aid Project (SABAP), which aims to support local initiatives to improve the quality of basic education, including adult education, in three provinces. One of them is the Eastern Cape which is discussed by Cleaver Ota in the next paper.

2 Considering the distinction between

Before looking at the evaluations of these projects itself, it may be worthwhile spending just a few moments on defining specific terms and what they mean. The literature on *monitoring* and *evaluation* uses a number of terms about which there is often no universal agreement but, for reasons of clarity, it seems important at the outset to define what we mean by them for the purpose of this paper.

Defining Impact

Impact, therefore, we shall define as the longer-term effects of a project or programme, effects which are brought about by change and which outlive the project. The evaluation of SABAP in Eastern Cape did not, by its own admission, seek to evaluate impact but focused rather on the short term achievements or outputs:

> *The domain of enduring change is a long-term process which implies that SABAP cannot be expected to produce the desired impact in the period of one year.* (SABAP :5)

Defining outputs

Although there is no final definition of "outputs" it is here argued that if an evaluation focuses more on outputs, in addresses those specific achievements which the project design was supposed to guarantee. By their nature these may be described as questions of *topicality* rather than of *sustainability*. There are good reasons for this, having happened in the SABAP evaluation – the most important being that implementation of the project had only just been completed and it was not therefore possible at that stage to make a judgement about possible long-term effects. It was therefore a formative evaluation – a very useful one – and, to use Cleaver Ota's own words, 'it concentrated on guiding ideas, change in infrastructure, theory, methods and tools'. The purpose of the evaluation (which Book Aid International had helped to shape) was not only to find out what had happened in the SABAP project in the Eastern Cape but, just as importantly, to *learn lessons* which can be applied in the two subsequent phases of the project.

Three major implications of such an evaluation may be singled out:

- It is a health check – it provides an opportunity to assess the project in mid-stream and to see to what extent practice conforms to the theoretical design of the project.
- It can, and should, inform subsequent phases of the project. This is particularly true in the case of SABAP where implementation is being carried out on a sequential basis - Eastern Cape in Year 1, Mpumalanga in Year 2 and so on.
- It allows scope for change, for example to alter or amend the project outputs and activities.

3 Defining sustainability

The evaluation of SABAP in Eastern Cape concentrated, as we have seen, more on outputs than on impact but the evaluator was nonetheless able to conclude that 'the *foundation* of enduring change had been laid' (SABAP: viii).

This leads us to the question of sustainability and here again we attempt a definition of this concept. We believe that the meaning of sustainability comprises two aspects:

- The first is changed perceptions in individuals, the possibility of thinking differently, and perhaps more positively, about the situation that the project was designed to assist. This includes an understanding or appreciation that change and development are possible.

- The second is the extent to which the project activities will continue after the donor's financial support has been withdrawn.

The second aspect, we maintain, is impossible without the first. In other words, activities will almost certainly not continue without changed perceptions. This may be the link between the *topical* and the *sustainable*. Enough people with altered perceptions can begin, albeit slowly, and other things being equal, to change and develop institutions whose services can then better respond to users' needs. These consequences are the *long-term effects* of the project, that is to say its impact. An example of such change is the fact that one of the organisations in Nigeria to which the AIDS awareness booklet had been distributed decided to translate it and so make its central messages more easily accessible.

4 Ensuring sustainability and measuring impact

What are the implications of trying to ensure project sustainability and measure impact?

41 Ensure stakeholder involvement

Firstly, is the need to ensure that all the stakeholders are actively involved in the project from the outset; not the point at which implementation begins but at the much earlier planning and design phase. The overall assessment of the AIDS awareness project was positive but at the same time one of the conclusions of the report[1] nevertheless drew attention to the fact that 'the project and its evaluation would have benefited from more detailed

1 The project was evaluated with the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS), the Ghana Library Board and two local NGOs in Uganda, among others.

consultation with partners and local participation at the project design stage'. The need for inclusivity when thinking about evaluation at the design phase is illustrated from one of the lessons learned from this project:

An important issue is the level of consultation over new initiatives and active local participation in their design and planning. Informal consultation took place during the development of the project, but the project was not discussed formally with all partners until it was due to begin. Although those organisations that became directly involved in this project chose to participate, the origin of the project was not clear and it seems likely that many were not fully aware of what exactly would be required in its implementation and evaluation... . The lack of local ownership of the project is clearest in the evaluation, where input on the planning of the exercise was requested but very little received (Report on AIDS awareness project in Uganda).

4.2 Clarity of focus

Secondly, there should be absolute clarity about what is to be evaluated. The original intention of the evaluation of the AIDS project was to assess behaviour change as a result of the use of the booklet. However, it became clear that such an attempt (which would have been a true impact study), had to be scaled down to something more feasible but still useful. In short, a triumph of the pragmatic over the ideal. What was considered instead was the difference that the participating organisations felt the availability of the booklets had made to what they could do.

The same consideration applies to the core book provision programmes managed by BAI. BAI works with a great variety and number of partner organisations all of which are selected against a set of criteria that has been developed over time and which were formally written up in 1996. The criteria concern matters of need, role, mission, objectives, access and use. BAI constantly monitors the activities and outputs achieved within these partnerships and is now recommending in an internal review of its monitoring and evaluation activities that a formal evaluation by an external evaluator should be carried out with one or more of the major partners. It would be perfectly feasible to evaluate the whole process of providing books (including the vital question of whether they were the right books) to, say, the Kenya National Library Service and the effect of the programme on the services delivered by the KNLS. Such an evaluation would be a formative one but, because of the close links and the fairly intensive monitoring activities, might not throw up many original findings.

It would be very much more difficult, time-consuming and expensive to undertake a true impact study, in other words to attempt to assess the impact of the provision of books on, say, the educational achievements of individual users of these services. One obvious difficulty, but only the first one, would be to disentangle the books provided specifically by BAI from others in the KNLS book stock. Notwithstanding these difficulties, BAI intends to attempt an evaluation that would examine not only outputs but impact as well.

4.3 The need for baseline data

Thirdly, it would seem difficult if not impossible to measure impact unless there is first a baseline study against which to measure the eventual outputs of the project. The obvious implication of such an approach is that the timescale of the project would inevitably be extended unless only the most readily available statistics were used. The disadvantage of such statistics is that they are usually quantitative in nature and do not reflect the much more complex situation that the project is trying to address.

For example, the goal of the SABAP project was 'to support local initiatives to improve the *quality* of basic education' and this reflects the emphasis rightly placed in most projects now on issues of *quality* rather than quantity. An extended timescale needed to address issues of quality at the stage of the baseline study, in its turn, implies a greater overall project cost.

4.4 Conceptualise the evaluation in the design phase

Fourthly, is the need to consider from the earliest stages of the project what is to be evaluated and, at the design phase, to build in appropriate indicators that will enable the measurement of impact. All stakeholders should be involved in this process. Both these factors – inclusivity (referred to in 4.1) and early planning – should help to ensure that all the stakeholders will be committed to the evaluation process and that the evaluation will be an integral part of the project and not a kind of appendix added on at the eleventh hour. This will be important if, as should be the case, the evaluation is a means for all the participants to learn lessons from the exercise.

4.5 Consider other factors that might impact on the project

Fifthly, the complexity of measuring impact is increased by the necessity of evaluators gauging the extent to which the project intervention itself (as opposed to any number of external influences), has caused changes to happen. The impact assessment therefore has to consider other factors including the political, social and economic context in which the project has been operating.

This calls for a different kind of health check from that mentioned in the context of a formative evaluation. A project or programme may be good, if that description is permitted, within its own terms but may have unintended and perhaps what are perceived to be negative consequences elsewhere. For example, the core book provision programmes managed by BAI are designed to meet immediate needs and, judging by the feedback, they do serve this purpose. According to a report issued this year by the Malawi National Library Service, more than half of the additions to stock in 1997 originated from BAI. The negative conclusions which could be drawn from this are:

- that a dependency culture is being created
- that the provision of these books from an external source is inhibiting the development of the local publishing industry.

The President of the Pan African Booksellers Association made exactly this point this year to Book Aid International. This illustrates the clash between the *topical*, that is the provision of books to meet an immediate need, and the *sustainable*, namely sustainable book provision from within Africa.

In its reply, BAI agreed that supporting the local book supply chain was essential to sustainable book provision in Africa and highlighted some of its own work in that area. At the same time it argued that books were not yet an affordable commodity in Africa and that, in order to develop a reading culture, short-term needs had to be met alongside investment in the local book industry. It concluded that, at every stage, there was a need to develop imaginative and realistic ways of getting books to those who need them.

Even when the above implications of trying to ensure project sustainability and measuring impact have been taken into account, there still remains what is perhaps the greatest difficulty of all, which is knowing to what extent the project intervention itself, rather than any number of *external influences*, has caused changes to happen. The impact assessment therefore has to consider other factors including the political, social and economic context in which the project has been operating. A book, or the information contained in it, may be necessary to pass an exam, for example, but it may not be sufficient. Other factors, such as the facilities provided by the school, the quality of the teaching and the degree of parental support, might all be equally important in the process. It therefore becomes extremely difficult to isolate the book itself from these other influences.

4.6 Serving multiple stakeholders

And finally, there is the extent to which possible demand for rigour and for proof of impact is linked to accountability to the donor rather than to project or programme development. In the case of the AIDS awareness project, the evaluation was donor led. As we have seen, this is not the ideal way of doing things but, on the positive side, useful lessons emerged from the experience which BAI has fed into subsequent work. Can an evaluation serve both the needs of the donor who wishes to be assured that the money has been well spent and those of the other stakeholders whose needs are of a different order? As things stand, it has to serve both purposes and to be not only a demonstration of the goal achieved but also a learning exercise that will illuminate future activities beyond the project's life-span and inform comparable projects elsewhere.

5 Conclusion

While assessments tend to focus on outcomes rather that impact which outlives the project life-span, it is nevertheless possible to answer questions pertaining to issues of sustainability. The *lessons learned* as discussed in the previous section, are posed as suggestions for overcoming limitations imposed by assessments which would normally focus on the measuring of intended project outcomes.

6.2 Topicality vs. sustainability in the evaluation of the South African Book Aid Project

Cleaver Ota
University of Fort Hare
South Africa

In this paper, Cleaver Ota considers the role of assessment in attaining a prognosis for project sustainability. His paper outlines the approach employed for determining the outcomes of the **South African Book Aid Project (SABAP)** and certain concerns pertaining to project sustainability. While he concludes that the project had achieved all of the outcomes defined in the project document, he points to extraneous factors which impact on these attainments. He accordingly asserts that it is not possible to assess impact or to speculate on sustainability without locating the project within its socio-economic and political context. To do so would be tantamount to decontextualising the delivery possibilities. This is because there are a number of extraneous factors which impinge on the actual implementation and which have a bearing on the potential for sustaining the project.

With regard to the **SABAP** project, he identifies two such features, namely the role of government in financing the *post-donor* phase, and the complex issue of *collaborative relations* inherent in multi-partnered project delivery. With regard to the former, he indicates that in spite of the project having achieved all the aims for *current* delivery, the pending *post-donor* financial squeeze will most certainly impinge on sustainability. The latter feature refers to the inherent tensions associated with the collaborative model of governance, management and delivery of education services, which, in the case of **SABAP**, might impinge on sustainability. While Ota portrays sustainability in terms of a continuation of the existing project, it could be argued that **SABAP** leaves a legacy of 'processes' and their attendant understandings of book delivery. Nevertheless, in Ota's terms, the possibilities for sustainability are limited.

To understand why Ota asserts that it is difficult to arrive at a prognosis for sustainability, one has to have an understanding of the socio-economic context in which **SABAP** is being implemented. He elaborates on these features in this paper.

1 Introduction

The new legislation and policies in education in South Africa firmly anticipate the establishment of self-managing schools. One of the projects which has the primary objective of assisting the development of self-managing schools was the Quality Schools Project.[1]

The **South African Book Aid Project (SABAP)** was implemented in the Eastern Cape and was located in the Quality Schools Project. The strategy of **SABAP** was on whole school development. This included the establishment of school governing bodies, increased parental and community involvement in schools, and INSET for teachers and principals. An additional feature of the project was the creation of District Education Resource Centres (DERCs), whose main function was to provide library services for the surrounding communities and schools.

SABAP, a DFID-funded project, may be distinguished by its multi-partnered implementation. In the Eastern Cape, the partnership comprised the Eastern Cape Department of Education through the Provincial Libraries, and Information Service (LIS) Directorate. The project was managed in the UK by *Book Aid International* (BAI), and was implemented by the Institute of Training and Education for Capacity-Building (ITEC). ITEC, together with Read Education Trust (READ), were responsible for the training.

1 It is pertinent that this paper contextualises the project being considered since the context is crucial to the question of sustainability.

This paper considers the *modus operandi* surrounding the evaluation of this multi-partnered project. It then discusses the attainment of the outcomes that were defined in the logical framework. The paper finally concludes by asking why in the face of its successful attainment of outcomes, the project's prognosis for sustainability is not very positive.

2 Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the extent to which SABAP was considered to be of value to key stakeholders and critical interest groups associated with the project. In order to do this, it was necessary to assess the extent to which **SABAP**:

- improved access to books and other materials
- provided effective training in library resource management
- created community-based structures that would be truly involved in the project
- created effective partnerships that would facilitate the transfer of relevant knowledge, skills and values.

When they conceptualised the research design, the research team found that the log frame was particularly valuable since it outlined the hierarchy of projected goals.

21 Assessing impact of SABAP – ways of looking

The short-term objectives of **SABAP** were to ensure that there would be:

- better equipped primary school/resource centres/community libraries
- a trained and effective staff in those libraries
- an improved community understanding of the importance of books
- an enhanced capacity in the Provincial Libraries and Information Service, a directorate in the Eastern Cape Provincial Education Department, to manage the project after the pilot phase.[2]

The evaluation intended, in terms of this general framework (although it was not constrained thereby), to assess the following aspects within the *constraints of the context* of the project:

- the relevance and suitability of the materials provided
- accessibility of the materials, including the system for distributing materials to the cluster of schools
- the use made of the materials
- the provision of training for the setting up and maintaining of systems to ensure administrative efficiency and the effectiveness and security of the materials
- training to stimulate an appropriate use of the materials
- the extent to which resources are shared and the community is involved in the project
- any aspect of the project that could contribute to its *sustainability*.

2 The fourth criterion was not incorporated in the logical framework but was implied therein and has relevance for project sustainability.

The evaluation guidelines contained in the terms of reference suggested important considerations. These included the necessity for the evaluation team to be balanced in terms of gender, for the evaluation enterprise to contribute to the building of capacity, and for the evaluation exercise to be as participatory as possible. In addition to the criteria specified in the terms of reference, the assessment was influenced by our understanding that an evaluation is

> *[It is] a type of disciplined inquiry undertaken to determine the value (merit and or worth) of some entity – evaluand – such as a treatment, program, facility, performance, and the like – in order to improve or refine the evaluand (formative evaluation) or to assess its impact (summative evaluation) (Lincoln and Guba 1989:50).*

Once they had been informed by these guidelines, it was necessary for the research team to formulate an approach according to which the above-mentioned *specific* and *related* project objectives could be assessed. The following methods were therefore used.

2.3.1 Review of documents

A vast amount of project documentation had been accumulated during the years of implementation. It was necessary to select documents which would *speak* to our evaluative questions. We were able, from the various progress reports, to gain a sense of the progress and the timing of such progress that was being made in pilot schools. In addition, the records gave an indication of the gap between targets and achievements. The documentation also provided background data which enabled the **SABAP** intervention to be located within its context. We accessed documentation in the form of annual reports, minutes, progress reports and other literature which was relevant to the project.

A documentary study was considered to be the most appropriate way of attaining a sensitivity to the *what had happened* in the project. Thus, for example, minutes answered questions about *processes* and *functioning* while annual reports, and progress reports provided an understanding of the *changes* as they had occurred over time.

The documentation also provided an opportunity to conduct a cost analysis of the project.

2.3.2 Focus groups and one-on-one interviews

One-on-one interviews and *focus group* discussions were conducted. We selected qualitative methods which would enable us to explore the perceptions of the various players. In particular, the focus discussions and interviews were useful in enabling us to gain insights into the participants' perceptions of *quality*. This was considered pertinent insofar as it enabled us to assess the extent to which these critical interest groups considered that the project had or had not achieved the stated objectives.

In addition, the interviews were beneficial in this evaluation since they:

- enabled the interviewer to probe for more specific answers and repeat questions where it appeared that the questions had been misunderstood
- enabled the interviewer to observe non-verbal behaviour. The paralingual cues in the discussions often gave the researcher an indication of other dynamics.
- facilitated spontaneous responses.

The data obtained in the interview process were verified through the process of triangulating the data. This facilitated our understanding of which targets had been attained and which had not.

3 Major findings of the evaluation

The discussion which follows under the headings listed here reveal how the findings are relevant to each of the specific outcomes:

- Better equipped primary school/resource centre/community libraries
- Effective training in library resources management
- Improved community understanding of the importance of books
- Enhanced Department of Education capacity for project management

Because we were able, in the evaluation, to operationalise the above criteria, the subsequent discussion comments on the extent to which the goals were achieved. The discussion also refers to incidences where the project did not achieve certain goals.

31 Better equipped primary school/resource centre/community libraries

The following goals and critical project assumptions were met:

- the establishment of basic working libraries and systems at the District Education Resource Centres (DERCs)
- the purchase and delivery of books and other materials
- the establishment of effective security and maintenance systems
- the adequate and cost effective use of resources
- the achievement of reasonable borrowing levels
- the provision of relevant and suitable materials
- improved access and, in many cases, first time access to materials contributing to improved learning and teaching
- the introduction of mobile library system.

The following goals were not met:

- **Borrowing levels**
  The borrowing levels could have been higher if more schools had allowed learners to take books home.

- **Access**
  While, in general, resources were adequate, there was considerable variation among schools in terms of access.

- **The culture of reading**
  The evidence relating to the impact of books on the culture of reading, teaching and learning was ambiguous. While the majority of teachers and principals perceived significant improvements in the culture of reading, teaching and learning, a substantial number of learners claimed that the changes had not been significant.

3.2 Effective training in library resources management

The following targets and critical assumptions were met:

- **Coverage**
  The coverage of training was good.

- **Content**
  The content of training programmes was sound.

- **Delivery**
  The delivery of training programmes was efficient and effective.

- **Training**
  The training was relevant to work situations and planned functions.

- **Staff turnover rates**
  These were low.

- **Skills**
  The skills gained were utilised to improve job performance.

The limitations in training programmes are reflected in the following areas:

- The completion and thoroughness of training by DERC and individuals varied.
- Due to time constraints, training manuals that would have standardised training and assured quality were not developed. It should, however, be noted that training manuals are now being prepared for phase two of the project.
- There was limited on-the-job support to ensure the implementation of new ideas.
- Due to time constraints, the training of DERC facilitators was restricted to library resource management. It would appear that a broad range of development activities is taking place in some DERCs. This means that there is a need to extend the training of DERC facilitators to rural education facilitators.

3.3 Improved community understanding of the importance of books

The following targets and critical assumptions were met:

- the establishment of representative community structures
- meaningful community involvement
- community capacity building
- voluntary contributions by communities to the project

Difficulties experienced in achieving the an improved community understanding of the importance of books were reflected in:

- the limited social marketing of the project
- resistance on the part of a few DERC facilitators to the meaningful involvement of the community
- a lack of clarity about roles and functions on the part of some community-based structures' members

3.4 Enhanced Department of Education capacity for project management

The following targets and critical assumptions were, on the whole, met:

- the creation of effective structures for cooperation
- the sharing knowledge, skills and competencies among the implementing and governmental agencies (this enhanced the Department's capacity to manage the project after the pilot phase)
- the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships

Deficits in cooperation were attributable to:

- budget and time constraints
- the uncertainty resulting from the PLIS separation from the Department of Education
- communication problems caused by a lack of telephone and fax facilities in the rural schools
- a limited sense of ownership and control of the project by PLIS

5 Sustainability

While the findings outlined in the previous section speak volumes for the success of the project (insofar as it successfully achieved many of its projected goals), I nevertheless contend that it is difficult to make any prognosis about the sustainability of the project.

The issues of long-term sustainability relate first to the question of funding for the project after the donor funds have ceased to be allocated. The assumption was that the provincial government would take over the costs of running the libraries but, in the event, this did not happen. (An interesting development is that the project is now housed in one of the large teacher trade union's offices – as opposed to government offices.)

It is necessary when making a statement about project sustainability to take a variety of social, economic and political factors into account. The need for the provincial government to take over the running costs of the SABAP project was one of the prerequisites for sustainability. But this did not happen. When linking sustainability to context, it must be noted that the Eastern Cape is regarded as the poorest South African province – a province in which vast numbers of teachers are being retrenched as part of a rationalisation process. Numerous schools lack basic infrastructural needs (such as water, lights, toilets and desks). Against this background, the implications for funding are not clear. It is, however, possible that 'nice-to-haves' like books – in a poverty-stricken province – would be an unlikely government priority.

The second issue relating to sustainability relates to resolving tensions in the collaborative model of governance, management and delivery of education services. The inherent tensions in this model are (for example):

- democracy vs. professionalism
- organisational choice vs. professional choice

The long-term sustainability of school improvement efforts such as **SABAP** and the Quality Schools Project depend on the extent to which the tensions mentioned above can be resolved.

Sustainability implies the need for agreed definitions about requisite institutional capacity and how the project itself is defined. Sustainability also implies that the interests which promote and are affected by the project must at least be of 'one mind' if the project is to be sustained in the long term. This shared vision has to carry the project forward. In the arena of evaluation, assessment must also take into account the extent to which the project is able to impact on the ideas and interests of participating institutions.

6 Conclusion

Evaluation, as I pointed out above, is about determining the value (worth and/or merit) of a programme or project. There are two critical questions that relate to assessing the value of **SABAP**. *Did **SABAP** do things correctly?* This refers the degree of cost efficiency that was achieved in realising the specific objectives of the project. On the basis of the performance indicators and critical assumptions, the expected outputs were not only well achieved: they were also attained at a reasonable cost. The second and more critical question is: *Did **SABAP** produce valued outputs?* In answer to this question, a substantial number of the stakeholders answered in the affirmative on all the four outputs.

The foundations of enduring change have been laid because **SABAP** provided guiding ideas, theories, methods and tools and because they built teams from groups of individuals. The project has, in addition, developed skills and capabilities, and stakeholders are starting to see and experience the world differently. They are also beginning to form new beliefs and assumptions. Can this not be seen as the first step towards sustainability?

7

IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

7.1 Background to the MAPP evaluation

Carew B W Treffgarne
Senior Education Adviser
LACAD, DFID

The first paper in this section is a speech which was delivered by Carew Treffgarne, on behalf of the Latin America, Caribbean and Atlatic Department (LACAD) DFID, at various regional conferences on the impact of the professionalisation of the teaching of English in Mexico (3 – 11 July 1997). Her speech is included in this section because it provides a backdrop to the subsequent papers, all of which refer to the evaluation of the **Mexican Advanced Professional Programme (MAPP)**. The paper also offers a rationale for the model used to determine the impact made by **MAPP** on individual teachers, institutions, and more broadly, on the sector. While Treffgarne takes an eclectic approach to the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, she stresses the importance that the **MAPP** evaluation be both *formative* and *participatory*. This, she argues, would enable the various project players to obtain insight into such evaluative processes – benefits which would be of immense value.

The papers in this section bear testimony to the benefits derived from the process described by Treffgarne. The authors of the subsequent papers include references to the way in which participants were enskilled though the evaluative process, and to the extent to which the formative nature of the assessment contributed insights which were beneficial to sustaining the project and to initiating similar projects.

1 Background to MAPP

British support for this event in Zacatecas/Pachuca/Tijuana/Merida/Monterrey today arises from our involvement in the **Advanced Professionalisation Programme** for Mexican University teachers since 1991. The purpose of this training scheme for upgrading University teachers is capacity building in the widest sense, ie not just training of trainers, but English curriculum development and institutional development through the Schools or Departments of Languages and Language Centres in the State Universities.

It is part of the Mexican Government s commitment to raising standards in English teaching. In consequence the programme builds on the Certificate for Overseas Teachers of English (COTE) scheme, introduced by SEP in collaboration with the British Council. It is also linked to the complementary SEP/British Council programme for developing Self-Access Centres (SACs) for language teachers and students.

When I first visited the Programme 18 months ago, the evident signs of project impact exceeded our expectations. We were encouraged to find that the Director of Higher Education, Dr Arrendondo, shared our interest in ensuring that the evaluation of this exercise should be both participatory and formative. In this way, it is hoped that the Mexican Government, the British Government and each participating University will gain in-depth insight into the value of this training from the point of view of each institution that has benefited.

For DFID the **Advanced Professionalisation programme** is unique from several stand points:

- Firstly, it represents a unique experiment in terms of scale. Five different British Universities have been involved in 9 projects on courses designed to upgrade teachers from 31 public universities. In terms of quantitative impact, there has so far been a 75% success rate with 96/124 teachers gaining their undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications.

- Secondly, holding the training programme in Mexico represents a significant success in terms of cost/effectiveness and cost/benefit. During the 1991/1995 phase, 78 teachers successfully followed the MAP training programme in Mexico, whereas a similar budget from the British Government could only have supported 22 Mexican teachers studying for the same qualification on a full-time basis in UK. In cost/benefit terms 78 teachers rather than 22 teachers have successfully gained their certificates – meaning that Mexican Universities have so far gained 56 more qualified teachers than would have been the case if they had gone to UK.

For us it also represents a significant experience - not only in terms of low unit cost, but also in terms of cost sharing. The figure used to calculate the cost/ benefit of training in Mexico versus training in UK does not take into account the financial contribution of SEP, the participating Universities and the individuals concerned. SEP have contributed to the participants transport and accommodation costs. The host University for each taught module has been generous in its allocation of seminar rooms and administrative support, and

has contributed to the accommodation in Mexico of visiting British lecturers. And in many cases, the teachers have had additional expenses that they have met themselves. DFID paid tuition fees, book presentations, air fares for British tutors and management costs.

The fourth aspect of the programme that represents an innovation for DFID is the scope and scale of this Impact Study. The original plan was to undertake a traditional approach to evaluating the programme using a team of external consultants. However I was convinced by the presentations that I observed at Puerta Vallarta of the Western Masters and the Central Universities Diploma programmes in January 1996, that no external evaluation study could do justice to the impact of the programme in the way that those who have directly benefited from the training can do. The survey of personal involvement in institutional change I conducted among a sample of 34 teachers (from 25 Universities) in February 1997 confirmed this conviction.

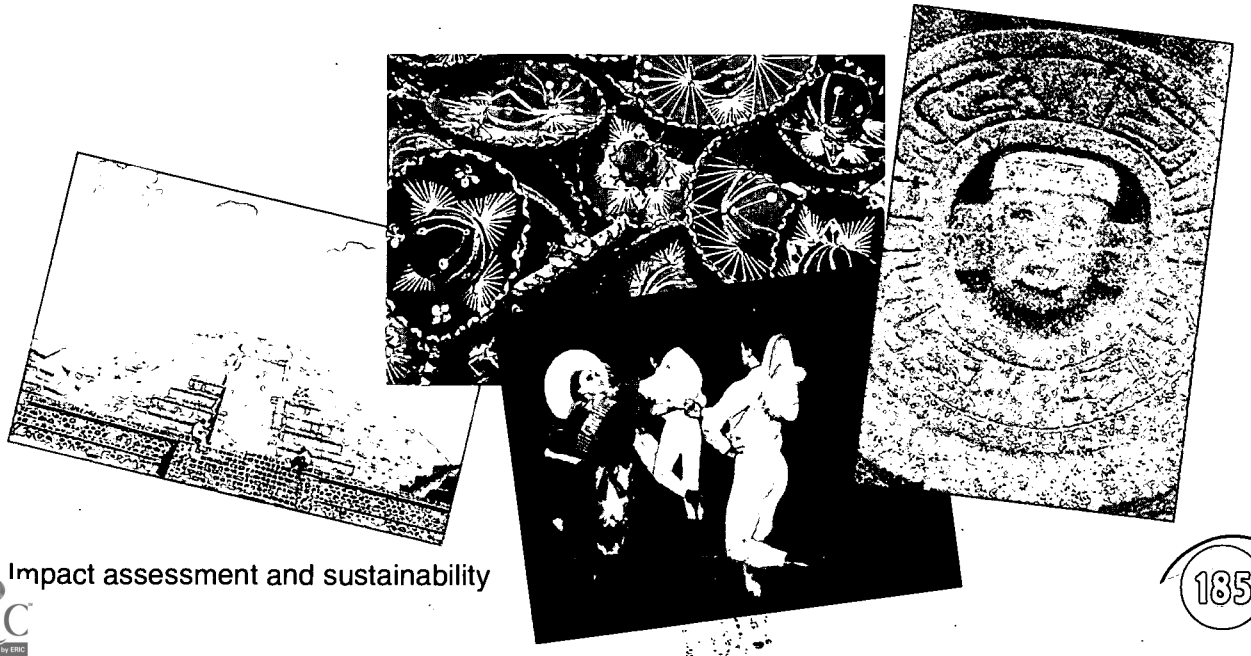
2 Assessing impact

This Impact Study is participatory because we hope that since February, the teachers in the scheme will have been engaged in researching the different areas where they think the MAP programme has affected their institution. It is participatory because the exercise should also have involved colleagues from the same Department or Language Centre (who have not necessarily undergone training).

The exercise will be formative because we anticipate that the following outcomes will emerge from the presentations:

They will demonstrate the value of what teachers have been doing as a result of their training to their own University authorities (and to others in the region).

They will highlight the quantitative and qualitative impact of their training. We realise that it will be impossible to extrapolate the effect of the Advanced Professionalisation Programme per se. Hence the impact exercise takes into account the cumulative effect of COTE, advanced training and SAC programmes funded by SEP and the BC. Most Universities have been affected to a greater or lesser extent by all three, and some teachers have been involved in all 3 as well.



The process of researching quantitative and qualitative impact will have helped to enhance the professionalism of those involved, and will hopefully encourage the Departments or Language Centres to set up procedures and mechanisms for monitoring the impact of curriculum development and teacher training in a more systematic manner.

Our concern as a participating funding agency is that the qualitative impact of the training is clearly demonstrated in terms of

- new teaching responsibilities and skills
- university curriculum development
- wider role as academic curriculum adviser
- new administrative responsibilities
- involvement in INSET
- involvement in autonomous learning
- new research opportunities
- wider academic exchange
- last but not least, greater professionalism

This needs to be recognised. For many teachers this means an improvement in status, and this should lead to an increase in salary. In consequence, we urge all university and ministry representatives to redouble their efforts to ensure that the British certificates awarded by the scheme are recognised in each participating teachers place of work/host university, and of course nationally.

Impact in a programme like this can be read in four ways. In the February workshop at the British Council we explored the distinction between impact on the individual, and impact on the institution. There is also the question of impact on relations between the Universities and SEP. Finally there is the question of impact on the external funding agency, DFID.

3 Conclusion

To summarise what I have already identified as unique or innovatory, this programme demonstrates to DFID:

- the value of organising the training in Mexico (rather than in UK). I should add that, in addition to lowering the cost substantially, more women have been able to benefit;
- the value of cost sharing in order to emphasise the Mexican stake in the ownership of this project (and institutional commitment to making the most out of those cadres who have benefited from the training);
- the value of evaluation exercises/impact study conducted by the institutions themselves. This will hopefully feed into the process of qualitative change and development in each Language Department or Centre, and hence these presentations represent a first step in the on-going process of curriculum research and evaluation.

There is considerable interest in what we are doing this week in Mexico in London, because this particular approach to impact studies is in itself an innovation.

We are here to listen and learn. I am sure that we shall not be disappointed.

7.2 Sustaining Impact: the Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Project

Keith Morrow
ELT consultant

Morrow is concerned in this paper with the extent to which programmes are able to sustain the impact of their outcomes after the intervention is concluded. The paper distinguishes between *intended* and *unintended outcomes* and argues that while the former are measurable, conventional summative methods cannot evaluate the latter. The author argues that if the unintended outcomes are to be known at all, they will be known only to the individuals who are participating in the project.

The author outlines an enterprise which was undertaken to ascertain the extent of the impact on participants in the **Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Project (MAPP)**. **MAPP** was designed to upgrade the professional qualifications of teachers working in university schools/ departments of languages, and language centres. It also incorporated the broader aim of capacity building in the widest sense – which was defined as teachers training *and* the extent and value of contributions made to institutional development.

The paper then outlines the kind of evaluation approach which was used to obtain a sense of the impact made by the project as it *simultaneously contributed to the achievement of outcomes,* especially those related to institutional development. The kind of approach that was used also ensures that a broader dissemination of the information which has been obtained will be made, and that the evaluation will play a formative part in the building of institutional capacity. In this way, the process of evaluation could itself contribute to the aims of the project.

1 Introduction

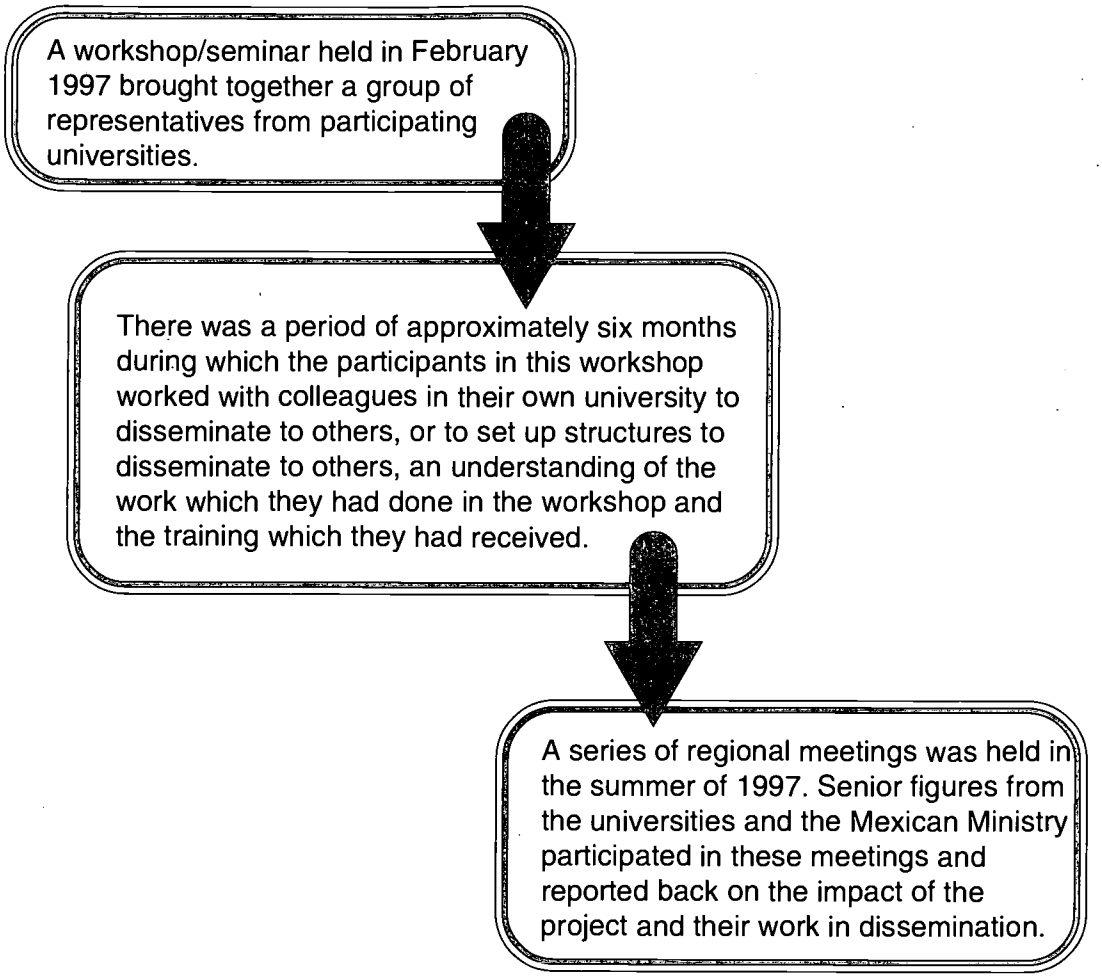
The **Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Project (MAPP)** was set up with the support of ODA/DFID in 1991. In its simplest sense, it was a scheme to upgrade the professional qualifications of teachers working in university schools/departments of languages, and language centres. It also incorporated the broader aim of capacity building in the widest sense. In this sense, Morrow understands capacity building to mean not just the training of teachers: he defines it to include English curriculum development and institutional development. From 1991 to 1997 five British universities were involved in nine separate projects which ran courses for teachers from 31 public universities.

Towards the end of the project, it became clear that many of the intended outcomes were not susceptible to evaluation of a conventional summative nature. While certain of the outcomes (for example, the number of participants, their success rate in obtaining target qualifications and the costs incurred) could be measured in straightforward terms, it was clear that much of the impact of the project was not easy to measure since, if it was known at all, it was known only to the individuals concerned. It was in fact unlikely that even they understood the more subtle implications of the impact since they had never been accorded any formal opportunity within the framework of the project to articulate or explore what the impact on themselves might have been.

It was therefore decided, with the active encouragement of the Mexican government, to undertake a participatory evaluation which would draw directly on the experience of the participants. Furthermore, it was decided that the evaluation should be formative in nature. It was also decided that the evaluation would not only include attempts to uncover in retrospect the impact that **MAPP** had made, but that it would also include an exploration of ways of effectively disseminating this impact in the institutions in which participants were based. It was felt that an impact evaluation of this kind would contribute to institutional development.

2 The formulation of a participatory approach

It was decided to design an approach that would enable participants to articulate the impact that the project had had on them as individuals. This impact evaluation therefore comprised the following three elements:



2.1 Objectives of the participatory impact evaluation

The evaluation had three main objectives:

- Firstly, we wanted to know how the training which participants had received in the project had brought about change for them as individuals, and how it enabled them to contribute to change in the institutions in which they worked. This was *direct* impact evaluation.

- Secondly, we wanted to establish the best possible conditions for change to continue to take place after the project had ended. This was where our evaluation focused on *sustainability.* Our fundamental aim in this area of the project was to harmonise personal and institutional agendas, and we found that we could achieve this best by allocating to participants main responsibility for *disseminating* the results of the project.

- Thirdly, we looked for ways for participants to inform colleagues both inside and outside the institution of developments which were taking place.

Our review of what we achieved highlighted three issues of particular relevance to the evaluation of impact.

The close interdependence of the three areas outlined above

Sustainability (which is perhaps the key issue for the funding agency) was enhanced by an impact evaluation which involved participants and helped them to articulate the changes which had taken place in their professional lives as a result of the project. This articulation is crucial since, without it, the impact of the project may have remained hidden – even to those who participated in it. We also realised that sustainability is enhanced when participants help to disseminate information about impact. But because effective dissemination requires specific skills and procedures, we realised that participants needed to be taught such skills if they did not already have them. Far from being self-indulgent proselytising, the teaching of such skills to participants should be viewed as a crucial aspect of sustainability.

The initial workshop was therefore much more concerned with exploring ideas about change and development on both a personal and an institutional level. It was also concerned with providing a framework in terms of which participants (1) might identify changes which had taken place in their own professional context as a direct result of the training they had received or (2) be able to say how such a training had enabled them to contribute more effectively. Some general categories were developed to group the changes identified by participants. These included:

- new teaching responsibilities and skills
- university curriculum development
- the wider role as academic curriculum adviser
- new administrative responsibilities
- involvement in INSET
- greater professionalism
- new research opportunities
- wider academic interchange

Discussion about ways in which participants could become proactive in bringing about change in their work contexts was another important feature of the workshop. On one level this involves the development of dissemination and implementation skills. It also involves the identification of appropriate action areas where sustainable *local* initiatives can have important consequences in building and strengthening the institution.

Sustainability involves helping project participants to set targets for the future.

The concept of benchmarking for ensuring the achievement of outcomes and the achievement of sustainability is a crucial one that was unfamiliar to participants. A lot of time at the initial workshop was therefore taken up in exploring the notion of target-setting, and in exploring the different ways in which targets could be identified and set for different aspects of the work of their institutions. One of the most important outcomes of the workshop was a set of benchmarks for developing the curriculum and delivering the four different types of *Licenciatura in ELT* courses.

A striking feature that emerged during this process was the degree of difference between different institutional contexts, and hence the differences in specific targets set by participants from different institutions. In spite of this, the sharing and discussion of categories within which benchmarks could be established was a major benefit of the initial workshop. This once again emphasises just how necessary the participatory approach is. Apart from being likely to be either wrong or irrelevant in content in individual settings, externally imposed global benchmarks also fail to involve the project participants as stakeholders in their implementation.

3 The need for different documentation for different audiences

This may seem an obvious or even a trivial point, but it is extremely significant. Traditionally, the recipients of a project report are the funding agencies, and the data they require are largely global in nature. However, it is essential, in a participatory and formative evaluation, that documentation be prepared *for the participants* and that such documentation relate to their individual experiences and needs.

In the case under discussion, we prepared a report at the end of the initial workshop and we circulated this report to all participants. It was essentially an *aide-mémoire* which described the stages of the workshop, the activities which we undertook and the rationale which supported them, the outcomes in terms of revealed impacts, and agreed benchmarks. It also suggested strategies which participants might use for working towards attaining these benchmarks in their own institutions. Although the report was compiled by the external consultant who had been leading the workshop, it was, in a sense, the property of those who had taken part in the workshop, and was meaningful to them in a way which an externally generated impact evaluation study could never be. This focus was stressed in the introduction:

The workshop we took part in was about change resulting from the training provided under the Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Scheme (MAPS):

- *identifying change in the knowledge, skills and attitudes which you and your colleagues now bring to your work;*
- *defining change in the areas of activity which your institution, and other similar institutions, are now able to undertake, drawing on the training which you and your colleagues have received;*
- *setting up, implementing, and monitoring change in your institution, in terms of your work, the work of your particular department and the work of the institution as a whole.*

This report is intended to help you to review some of the ideas and the material we discussed during the workshop, and to give you guidance in putting them into practice. We hope that you will be able to use the work that we did together to introduce a policy of systematic review and development into your own work and that of your colleagues and your institution (Morrow and Treffgarne1997 : i).

3 Conclusion

The overall focus of the workshop, and of the three-stage evaluation framework, was to help the participants to develop the skills they needed to foster institutional growth through their own professional development. Setting up a framework which provided the opportunity for participants to carry out research into qualitative and quantitative impact (but which placed the responsibility for the research on the participants themselves), enhanced the professionalism of those involved. It was in this way that the process of evaluation contributed to the aims of the project.

7.3 Assessing the impact of sector wide, institutional and policy outcomes

Kora Basich
Universidad Autónoma de Baja California
Mexico

In this paper Kora Basich describes the way in which the **Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Project** was assessed to determine the extent of its impact. The author begins the paper with an expression of surprise at the discovery (once the impact assessment had begun) of the extent to which the project had more than achieved its initially defined outcomes. She outlines the research approach used to gather data pertaining to impact, and indicates that that approach required participants collectively to *reflect* on the personal and communal impact that the project had made on the sector and on institutional and policy outcomes.

This paper once again reiterates that the actual research process that is employed for assessing impact can contribute to the achievement of project goals. This, the author points out, can then move the project onto a level that exceeds the achievement of the originally anticipated aims.

1. Introduction

Our university is situated in the north-western region of Mexico – in an area which, over the last twenty years, has been transformed from an agricultural to a primarily industrial zone. This relatively new socio-economic characteristic of our region, as well as its geographical location on the border with the United States, makes English Language skills an important part of any training programme.

English Language Teaching in Mexico has been enormously professionalised during the last five years. At the university where I teach, the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California in Mexico, two major ELT training programmes were offered between 1992 and 1997.

The first programme is the Bachelor in Philosophy of Education degree (B Phil Ed), which is offered by the University College of St Mark and St John (Marjons) in association with Exeter University, and in which 23 teachers participated. Eleven of these were from my own university. This programme was financed by the ODA (now DFID), which put up the finances for the College. Our travelling expenses and subsistence were funded by the Mexican Ministry of Education. The financial management of the project was undertaken by the British Council in Mexico.

The second training programme is the Certificate for Overseas Teachers of English (COTE), which is offered by Cambridge University, and which to date has trained more than fifty teachers in three state-wide programmes. The programmes were all undertaken at my University, and we received financial support (as has been mentioned) from the Mexican Ministry of Education and organisational support from the British Council.

2. Anticipated and unanticipated benefits

When a training process begins there are some clearly defined anticipated benefits. Our institution aimed to train teachers (in both the programmes mentioned above) so that we in future would be in a position to implement an English Teaching Programme of our own with the support of graduates from the B Phil Ed ELT course. I believe that these were clear and accomplishable goals.

When we performed an assessment of impact, we were greatly surprised when we encountered a number of unexpected consequences that had arisen out of the training programmes. Although some of these had not even been anticipated even in our long-term plans, they have proved to be enormously beneficial for both our institution and our region.

3. The approach which we used in our research impact

The methodology which we utilised to identify impact was eclectic, and our aim was to gather not only quantitative results, but also qualitative data of the kind that would enable us to identify which actions had produced the greatest impact. We designed different types of research activities in order to obtain this information.

3.1 Reflection workshop

Firstly, we planned a *reflection workshop*. This was organised so that we could bring together all the individuals who had participated in the training programmes so that they could collectively reflect on the type of work they had been doing prior to the intervention. They were required to reflect on where they were working and at what level they were operating. They were also expected to reflect on the procedures which produced change. Thus, for example, they had to think about the extent to which their work had changed and at what stage they believed these changes to have occurred.

We then asked them to reflect on what they were doing at present, how their views had changed, and what their expectations of themselves and their institution were. In the process we induced them to think about what their training and development aims were and how they were working to accomplish these aims.

This particular exercise produced a much greater quantity of useful information than we had expected. Indeed, participants used the time allocated to thinking about themselves and the opportunity to share their experiences with others so well that they identified, in the process, many of personal benefits which, until then, they had not even considered. This process actually therefore strengthened and reinforced the aims and objectives of the project. This meant that the actual research process contributed to the enhancement of the initial project goals.

The research process empowered the further growth and development of participants both in terms of their personal roles and their personal satisfaction and gains. But it also contributed to the enhancement of institutional and regional improvement in their areas of expertise.

3.2 The use of a questionnaire

We followed this exercise by giving each participant a questionnaire to take home for one week. Once again the *length* of time given to participants to consider their responses to the issues raised provided them each with opportunities for profound reflection. We believe that these opportunities were crucial factors in reinforcing changed practice.

3.3 Documentary research

Since we had agreed that it was necessary to obtain certain baseline data, we conducted *documentary research* by going through our own institutional database in order to find changes in programmes that were offered and changes in student and teacher characteristics. At the same time we examined our own relationships with other institutions, including educational, governmental and private institutions, in order to arrive at an understanding of how our own department had changed in terms of activities and responsibilities. We also gathered data about our own responses to change, the problems which we encountered and the way in which our aims were accomplished. We consider that one of the most important benefits of the training provided is an awareness of change and

how change may be managed. We had learned a good deal about how processes could be analysed by using the *Review-Plan-Act-Review-Plan-Act Cycle.*

4. Benchmarks

Another most important benefit which accrued from the impact analysis exercise that DFID initiated early in 1997 was that it provided us with guidelines for organising planning. Once we had conducted our baseline investigations and had acquired an adequate amount of baseline information, it was then much easier for us to see where we *had* been, how training had effected or promoted certain important changes, and where we could realistically hope to go from the point at which we had arrived. The benchmarks acted as guide. They located us in a context and enabled us to plan our own future development and growth. At the same time they offered us the opportunity to control quality and implement the programmes which we had planned.

Benchmark planning was an activity that (we found) conferred most tangible benefits.

5. Conclusion

Our University is deeply grateful for the aid which we received from the Department for International Development and for the support which was given to us by the British Council in Mexico. We are also profoundly indebted to those British universities which involved themselves so enthusiastically in the training programmes. The effort which was invested in these particular programmes has been enormously beneficial for the individuals who were trained, for their institutions and for regional development in Mexico. As I have indicated in this paper, the benefits which have accrued go far beyond what we initially anticipated. This in itself is a testimony to both the impact and to the sustainability of the project.

74 Determining the unanticipated outcomes and using these as benchmarks for future projects

Jorge Anguilar Rodriguez
The Autonomous University of Sinaloa

In this paper, Jorge Anguilar Rodriguez describes the method of assessment used in the **Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Scheme (MAPS)**. He indicates that although the research design utilised in this project was similar to standard research designs used elsewhere, the *emphasis* in this kind of assessment is different. The emphasis in the research design was directed at uncovering *inter alia* the *unanticipated outcomes* – and these, once discerned, played a significant role in ensuring project sustainability. In addition, he indicates that, as a by-product, these outcomes contributed to the development of new projects. The positive unanticipated outcomes were posed as benchmarks for the continuation of the MAPS programme. The assessment also enabled researchers to *discover capacity* among teachers. Several teachers showed enthusiasm for as well the ability to train new cadres – and this contributed to sustaining MAPS.

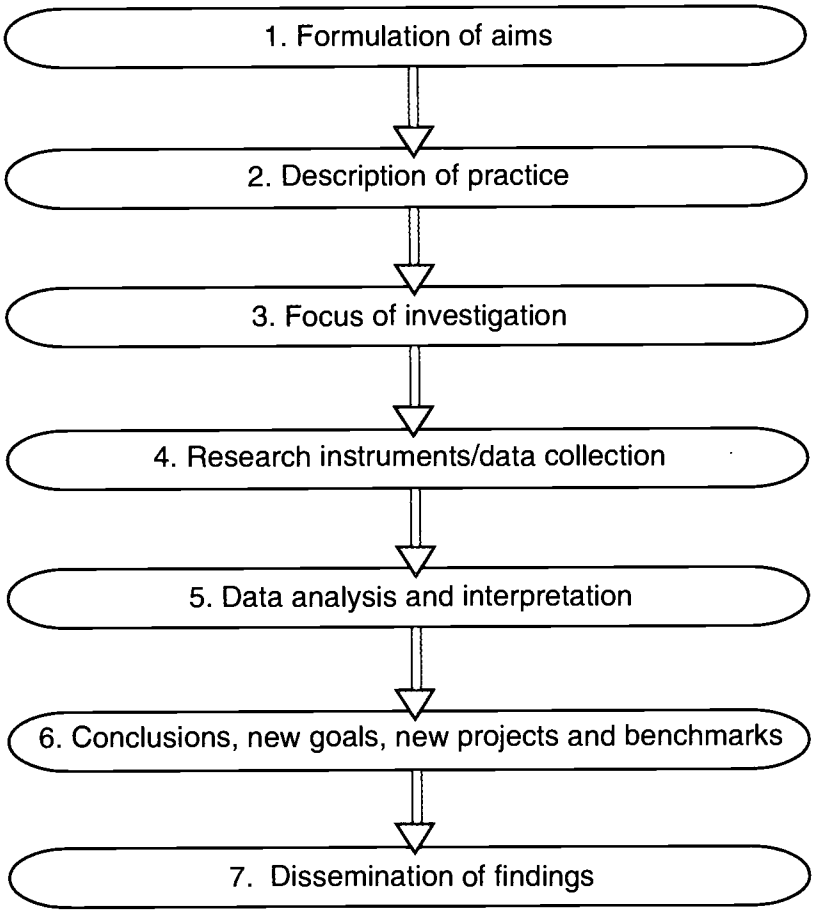
1 Introduction

The Autonomous University of Sinaloa (hereafter referred to as UAS) is located in the state of Sinaloa in Northwest Mexico. It has a population of 95 000 students. 11 630 of those students study at the four Language Centres of UAS in Los Mochis, Guasave, Culiacan, and Mazatlan. There are two different programmes in the language centres, the regular course for young adults and adults (which has an enrolment of 8 480 students), and the Saturday Children's Programme, with an enrolment of 3 150 children with ages ranging from 8 to 14 years old.

Both the regular courses and the children's programmes offer general English courses that teach the kind of communicative competence that children need and that adults need to make them effective communicators in their personal, academic and professional lives.

2 Methodology

In order to ensure the success of the impact evaluation and to have a clear framework for our evaluation, we decided to conceptualise this investigation as a process consisting of the following steps:



It is significant to note that although the above outline is similar to the conventional stages of all research enterprises, it was applied in such a way that the data gathered would be useful for the enhancement of project sustainability. Because the assessment needed to give as much attention to gauging the anticipated outcomes of the project as it did to gauging the unanticipated outcomes, each stage of the research design was considered for the what it would reveal about unanticipated outcomes. Thus, for example, stage 6 of the research outline, dwells on the importance of the establishment of new goals, new benchmarks and new projects. These arise from the uncovering of unanticipated outcomes in stage 5. For the same reason, stage 5 devotes a considerable amount of time to identifying what positive unanticipated benefits might be ascertained from project players. The subsequent phase refers to ways that such benefits could be mainstreamed so that new benchmarks might be formulated and new projects considered in stage 6.

2.2 Aims

We decided, prior to beginning the impact study, that we needed to formulate the aims of the investigation so that we could undertake more focused research. The aims specified at that time (April 1997) were:

- to investigate the extent to which individuals who have received training have contributed to the development of our institution
- to identify the expected and unexpected effects of the changes undertaken
- to identify changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes with reference to teaching, learning and language
- to become aware of our strengths and weaknesses
- to collect data that would provide us with findings which could be used to develop a plan for future development.

2.3 Description of practice and its effectiveness

After we had formulated the aims of our impact evaluation, we felt the need to describe our practice and programmes at the language centres prior to the implementation of the **Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Scheme (MAPS).** We did this so that we could familiarise ourselves with our teaching and management practices. We believed that such a description would lend weight to the evaluation and increase its validity and reliability. A team of teachers, administrators and academic co-ordinators were therefore subsequently involved in the process of describing practices and determining how effective they might be for meeting the needs of students, teachers, the institution and the community.

2.4 Focus of investigation

In order to be properly focused and avoid generalisations, we decided to determine, by way of analysis, the key areas that needed investigation. It was decided, after analysis, that the following areas needed assessment:

(1) Knowledge, skills and attitudes
(2) Teaching, learning and language
(3) Curriculum components
- syllabus
- materials
- assessment
- goals

In addition to these, it was necessary to gauge the *expected* and *unexpected* benefits as well as positive and negative effects of the project. This of course had implications for the choice of the research instruments.

2.5 Research instruments

Once we had agreed on the focus of investigation, we analysed various research instruments in order to find those that would be appropriate for assessing the areas to which we had assigned priority (those listed above). We found that practical and easy-to-implement instruments seemed to us to be the most appropriate. In order to make this part of the process more *valid* and *reliable*, certain contextual factors were taken into consideration. The research instruments which we ultimately chose were interviews, questionnaires, surveys, group activities and documentary evidence.

2.6 Data collection

We then decided to interview a few teachers on an individual basis in order to arrive at an understanding of personal involvement in institutional change. We planned, in this way, to collect data about individual and institutional change.

- Teachers were firstly asked to comment on their performance and on how they had viewed themselves before, during and after their training. To our surprise, we found that the *unanticipated benefits* and *outcomes* of the training that teachers received seemed directly related to the degree of their involvement.

- Secondly, we involved teachers in a group activity which comprised a series of tasks which would give us information about the effects of professional and institutional change. The teachers who were thus involved stated that they were surprised to discover how they had developed as professionals. They also indicated that they were willing to help in the development of our institution – thus contributing to project sustainability. The unanticipated benefits identified in the first part of this process were reinforced and discussed by the teachers in group activities. Questionnaires and surveys were used to collect the remainder of the data.

Once the data had been collected, we met to analyse and interpret all the data. We were both surprised and gratified as we identified, at the meeting, more evidence of both anticipated and unanticipated outcomes and benefits. This process also made us more aware that we needed to create the conditions which would maximise the potential inherent in the training, attitudes and willingness of teachers to participate more actively in the development of new programmes and projects in our institution.

We may say, by way of summary, that the data analysis and interpretation stage made us aware of the hitherto unrealised potential of our situation, and this motivated us to embark upon new attempts to professionalise English language teaching. Such attempts were necessary if we hoped to improve the quality of the service given to the community – not only in our institution but also in other institutions, both public and private.

2.8 Analysis of anticipated and unanticipated benefits

The unanticipated benefits, which were discerned in the process, were:

- greater professionalism
- better problem management/identification
- better job opportunities for women
- having more women in key positions
- institutional development
- interest in teacher training and education
- interest in postgraduate education
- more academic dialogue
- decision making that results in learner benefits
- awareness of the teachers' role in the education system
- awareness of change
- a new conceptualisation of teaching, learning and language
- learning how to learn and autonomous learning
- more learner-centred decision making
- more reflective/analytical teachers
- an interest in research
- management of change

3 New goals, benchmarks and projects

The research process played an important role in identifying the benefits of both the anticipated and unanticipated outcomes. The determination of unanticipated outcomes in particular played a profoundly significant role in shaping how the programme would be conducted in the future. The positive unanticipated outcomes illuminated possible ways of taking the project forward and also suggested other, related possible projects. It was for this reason that the assessment focused heavily on the implications of the unanticipated outcomes in our context and institution as well as on what these outcomes meant for the project and for sustaining practice. The positive outcomes (both anticipated and anticipated) were treated as

explicit benchmarks and goals for our current and future projects and programmes – and hence for the sustainability and further enhancement of the project.

As a result of the identification and definition of expected and unexpected benefits, we initiated several changes in our current programmes and projects and gave every encouragement to those who would have to carry them out. All these factors had far-reaching effects on project sustainability.

4 Dissemination of findings

We then attended a conference in Tijuana, Mexico, to present, describe and share the data which we had collected, the anticipated and unanticipated benefits, and our perceptions of the impact which the changes had effected. During this same conference, representatives from universities in north-west Mexico presented the impact which the Mexican Advanced Professionalisation Scheme has made in their institutions.

In addition, we organised a meeting in which we shared all details of our process as well as the expected and unexpected outcomes which we had identified and which are the subject of this paper.

5 Conclusion

We should like to state, in conclusion, that there are implicit and explicit benefits which arise out of impact evaluation studies. The most important of these, in my view, are the following:

- Impact studies raise awareness of the potentials and weaknesses of an institution.
- Impact studies make administrators and teachers aware of their new knowledge and skills, and their academic potential for developmental purposes.
- Teachers become aware of their important role in the education system
- Teachers become more involved and confident, and show a willingness to support the development of English language teaching.

We have become aware that English language skills are an essential asset for the development of the Universidad Autonoma de Sinaloa and for the whole of Mexico, and that our role as teachers and/or teacher-trainers is of paramount importance for the development of these skills. Finally, we should like to affirm that the benefits of the findings for project sustainability were immeasurable.

8

ANTICIPATED/ UNANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

8.1 Anticipated and unanticipated project benefits

Mfanwenkosi Malaza
Mpumalanga Primary Schools Initiative
Mpumalanga, South Africa

In this paper, Mfanwenkosi Malaza focuses on the *types* of impact made by the **Mpumalanga Primary Schools Initiative (MPSI)**. The **MPSI** was one of the first major DFID project partnerships with a provincial government in South Africa. The project was initiated shortly after the first democratic elections in 1994. The aim of the **MPSI** is to improve primary school learners' knowledge and skills in Mathematics, English Language and Science by providing integrated support for pre-service and in-service teachers' training.

In this paper, the author argues that the determination of a project's benefits is more complex than it appears at face value. He juxtaposes his discussion of project benefits against the background of the **MPSI** project. The paper begins with an elaboration of a variety of outcomes achieved by the **MPSI**. The author distinguishes between *anticipated* and *unanticipated* outcomes and argues that every project has a shade of both *intended* and *unintended* outcomes, whether they are positive or not. Very often, the impact of the unintended outcomes far outweighs the intended ones from the local people's point of view.

Anticipated outcomes, he states, are conceptualised in the project planning stage, guided by the project goal and stated in the project log-frame. These, he suggests, are best gleaned by utilising quantitative methods.

He proceeds to elaborate on the unanticipated outcomes which are not projected at the start of the intervention but nevertheless make a significant impact. He argues that these need also to be considered when evaluating project impact. He cautions that in identifying the unanticipated benefits, it is necessary to look at the wider context of a project's operational environment in order to guard against attributing effects to the project that are incidental to it – but that may not necessarily result directly from it.

1 Introduction

An outgoing deputy minister of education was once quoted as saying to his colleague:

> *Well, the hard work is done. We have the policy passed; now all you have to do is implement it (Fullan 1991:65).*

It may well be that hard work has, indeed, been done, but what the Honourable Deputy Minister conveniently ignored was that the processes beyond adoption of educational change are more intricate and complicated than mere adoption because warm-blooded people are involved and real change is at stake. Implementation consists of a process of putting into practice an idea, a programme or a set of activities and structures that are new to the people who are involved or who are expected to change. According to Fullan (1991), commitment to what should be changed often varies inversely with knowledge about how to work through a process of change. In fact, he argues that strong commitment to *a* particular change may be a barrier to setting up an effective process of change. It is significant, therefore, to try and understand both the dynamics of change and the process by which change occurs in a school or society in order to interpret the meaning of the evaluation data.

2 Methods of measuring impact

Carol A. Carrier (1990) makes the point that, traditionally, programme evaluators in developing countries have been more effective in assessing the quality of *inputs* than of *outputs*, simply because inputs are less controversial. It is easy to count the number of textbooks supplied and the number of lessons taught or workshops given. Project evaluation has traditionally been quantitative and characterised by the development of standardised tests and questionnaires, the production of data from large samples of schools and individuals, and the analysis of these data by various statistical methods.

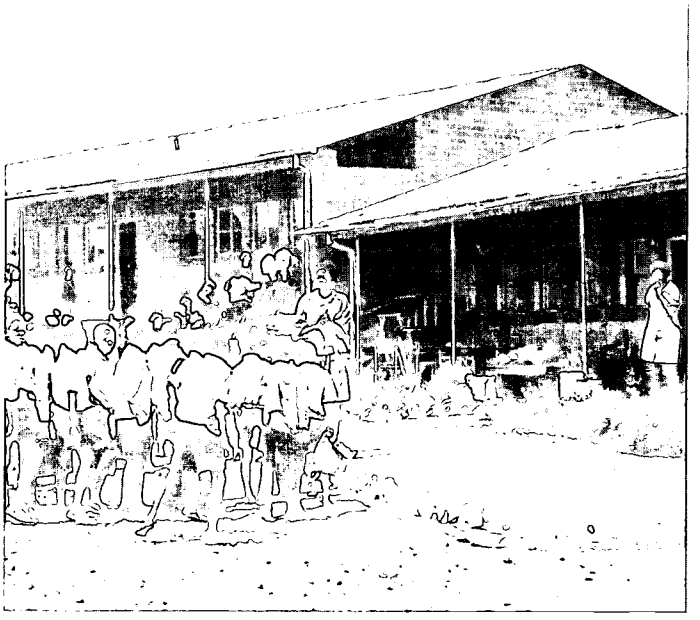
While, in principle, there is nothing wrong with this traditional approach to evaluating projects, there is a case to be made for using *illuminative* research methods. There is a real danger in the exclusive use of quantitative methods where either a qualitative method or a combination of the two methods might have been more appropriate. It is hard to see how questionnaire surveys can penetrate the gap between *word and deed* in the evaluation of projects. Quantitative methods tend to concentrate only on what can be measured and only on the *intended* outcomes. Every project has a shade of both *intended* and *unintended* outcomes, whether positive or not. And, very often, the unintended outcomes far outweighs the intended ones from the local people's point of view.

Qualitative methods tend to be more illuminative and are primarily concerned with description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction. Illuminative evaluation seeks to establish how a project operates and how it is influenced by a variety of school situations. It seeks to discern the critical project processes and the most significant features of project impact. Patton (1988) accordingly argues for a commitment to broadening the use of educational research strategies to include a full range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

A good example of a balanced approach to assessing a project impact is illustrated in the case of the **Mpumalanga Primary Schools Initiative (MPSI). MPSI** implementers developed instruments that could be used in school visits to collect data through interviews and observations. The information gathered is not a product of a robust scientific investigation but is nevertheless of value and is fed back into the MPSI planning processes and clinics, which are held once a term. This feedback then informs (in a formative manner) the operations of the project.[1]

Mpumalanga is one of the nine provinces in South Africa. The **MPSI** is the first major **DFID** project with a provincial government after the 1994 general elections, which brought about democracy. The aim of the **MPSI** it to improve primary school learners' knowledge and skills in Mathematics, English Language and Science through providing integrated support for pre-service and in-service teachers' training. In order to achieve this aim, **MPSI** utilises the expertise of Technical Co-operation Officers (TCOs), Subject Advisers, College-based Teachers' Centre Implementers, NGOs, and local and external consultants from the link institution.

The Project is being implemented in 74 schools, which are clustered into groups of between five and seven. A total of 185 primary school teachers participate in the project's activities.



1 A the time of writing, the project is yet to be evaluated formally

3 Project outcomes

As with all projects, the **MPSI** achieved a number of outcomes that were initially defined in the project planning stage. These were anticipated and were guided by the goal of the project. The project also evidenced a number of outcomes that were not anticipated – benefits which had a far-reaching impact on the sector.

3.1 Anticipated project outcomes

The anticipated outcomes were those which were conceptualised and envisaged prior to the start of the intervention. They were informed by the goal of the project. The following projected outcomes were incorporated in the **MPSI** logical framework:

- improved College of Education management
- enhanced knowledge, understanding and skills for primary teacher education on the part of the College of Education staff
- new professional training curricula and subject-specific syllabi for initial and continuing teacher education, conforming to the South African Committee of Teacher Education Policy and the National Qualifications Framework guidelines, and reflecting agreed provincial Department of Education policy on teacher education
- enhanced teaching skills by intermediate phase (Grades 4 - 6) teachers of Science, Mathematics and English within school clusters linked to functioning teachers' centres
- improved teacher support services in those school clusters linked to functioning teachers' centres
- teacher understanding and implementation of the *areas of learning* curriculum for the general education intermediate phase within the school clusters linked to functioning teachers' centres

3.2 Unanticipated project outcomes

A number of outcomes were not anticipated. These non-projected outcomes were outcomes resulting from **MPSI** activities, which may can be described as stop-gap activities and which did not form part of the project's core activities. For this reason, they are, therefore, not reflected on the log-frame. Some of the most important of these are:

- the development of principals of schools participating in the **MPSI** so that they are able to the role of instructional leadership
- the establishment of a network of teachers' centres
- the evolution of a comprehensive provincial INSET strategy with a five-year development plan

4 The intended benefits of the MPSI

As indicated above, the anticipated outcomes are meant to contribute to the intended project benefits. In order to gain a sense of the benefits, the **MPSI** developed a monitoring tool that takes into account both the qualitative and the quantitative progression of the project. While the instrument measures change in teaching and learning, it nevertheless allows the intended outcomes to be expressed in a quantifiable form in accordance with the verifiable indicators outlined in the project log-frame.

It must be mentioned that, at the time of writing, the **MPSI** is yet to undergo full-scale external evaluation and that, for this reason, any opinion expressed about the project's benefits may at best be described as preliminary. More robust scientific evidence still needs to be gathered to support these pronouncements. In the interim, pronouncements are based on the evidence gathered through the internal monitoring mechanisms referred to above and also through numerous interactions with the **MPSI** target groupings. What follows is a list of the benefits that may be attributed to the **MPSI** project.

4.1 Implementation benefits

There was a range of outcomes which pertained to the actual form of teaching and learning interaction. The most significant of these are:

- **Individualised instruction**
  There is sufficient data to suggest a definite change of the teaching-learning process towards more individualised instruction and group work. One of the shortcomings of the learning environment, both at school and college of education level, was the exclusive use of a teacher-centred, whole-class teaching approach based predominantly on *chalk-and-talk*. Teachers who are participating in the **MPSI** activities are experimenting with a variety of teaching methods which are discussed at workshops and further developed at the cluster group meetings.

- **Experiential learning**
  Teachers are increasingly resorting to hands-on experiential activities based on teaching learning materials developed from cheap recyclable materials. Special attention has been paid to imparting skills for developing such learning materials. Hitherto, commercially produced learning materials were left in the storerooms because it was feared that they might either be lost or broken.

- **Gaining of insight**
  Learners are challenged to arrive at conclusions by logical and, wherever possible, practical means. The learning environment is becoming increasingly cooperative rather than competitive. Group work and assignments encourage learners to cooperate with one another. The rote learning of formulas and theorems is gradually giving way to gaining insight into concepts.

4.2 Impact on learners

There is sufficient evidence to suggest an improvement in learners' attitude towards schooling.

In schools where the learner-centred approach is gaining momentum, the incidence of learners dodging lessons is decreasing. The project seems to have encouraged regular school attendance either by what it does or by virtue of its presence at the *selected* schools. Regular attendance results in learners' improved scholastic performances. No attempt has yet been made to compare scholastic performance of project schools with that of non-project schools.

4.3 Impact on teachers

There is sufficient evidence to suggest some degree of improvement in the teachers' mastery of pedagogical skills – a change which has resulted in a change in their classroom behaviour. Project teachers are becoming more open to, and comfortable with, team teaching and peer tutoring. Teacher-to-teacher relations, teacher-to-management relations and teacher-to-learner relations show some improvement. These changes may be attributed to an improvement in teacher self-confidence and self-image, which may in turn be the result of external support from the project. The fact that teachers interact with TCOs and offshore consultants, who bring with them international perspectives and experiences, serves as a major motivating factor. If one may judge from the amount of work covered with learners and attendance at workshops and cluster meetings, there is a marked improvement in their commitment to teaching.

4.4 Impact on school

Some schools are looking into ways of improving their resource provisioning. The Department of Education has been approached with requests to have billboards for advertising erected on school premises. Advertisers will be charged a fee and the income will be used to provide or improve facilities. Although there is some indication that some schools are already replicating such initiatives, the way schools are organised is still a problem. There is a clear need for developing school principals so that they can manage schools in the manner that facilitates the new approach. Overcrowded classrooms and traditional time-tabling prove to be major constraints. These are issues that may require another kind of intervention.

5 MPSI unintended benefits

The following main unintended benefits of the **MPSI** intervention have been identified.

5.1 Improved ability to deal with change

Schools participating in the **MPSI** programme appear to be less threatened by the challenges of educational changes, which are spearheaded by the National Department of Education. The exposure to the innovative instructional approaches is strengthening the schools' ability to carry out further changes. Principals are increasingly assuming the role of instructional leaders. School management is becoming more supportive of the teachers and vice versa. Individual teachers are emerging as curriculum leaders at their schools and cluster meetings.

5.2 Reduced learner migration to more advantaged schools

Since 1994, schools have been open to all. Wherever it was possible, learners from disadvantaged schools have left for more advantaged schools. Parents who could afford the travelling costs tended to bus their children to these schools. The **MPSI** has had the effect of reversing this learner-migration. While this reversal could be attributed to the impact of the **MPSI** programme, there are other contributory factors which could account for the reversal of migration. It would be inaccurate to attribute everything to the project as such. In the current economic climate, not all parents can afford the cost of sending their children to the former model C schools, as they are popularly known. Besides, the means of transport is not always reliable and there have been some gruesome accidents to vehicles carrying learners who travel to these schools. Whatever claim is made should be made against the background of these factors.

5.3 Willingness of schools to participate in the MPSI

Schools were keen to participate in the **MPSI**. Initially schools were not selected for participation in the **MPSI** according to specific criteria. However, due to popular demand, all schools in a particular area had to be included. The popular demand has to be seen against the background of the context of teacher development in the country. Since the introduction of performance-related payment, in principle, teacher development has become a bread and butter issue with teachers' unions which expect the **MPSI** project to level the playing field. Schools therefore had to be taken onto the project incrementally rather than selectively. This meant that all the schools in a particular area had to be drawn in. For some reason, however, schools that are already on board seem to interpret their participation in the project as an affirmation of some sort. The school governing bodies' support and commitment to their schools' success has improved. The governing bodies are ensuring greater participation in schools' activities by the parent communities.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is necessary to reiterate the purpose of this paper, which is to look specifically at the positive effects (benefits) of projects by extrapolating some lessons from the **MPSI**. It needs to be said that projects have ripple effects within their operational environment. Some of which are positive and others are not; some are immediate while others take time to appear. It is our view that the real effects of the **MPSI** (and similar projects) will show *long after* the project has run its course. This is true of all quality interventions in the classroom. It is for that reason that we emphasise the preliminary nature of the findings with regard to the **MPSI** benefits.

Nonetheless we believe that the findings give a strong indication of what may be expected when a fully- fledged impact study is commissioned. It is necessary to examine the wider context of a project's operational environment if we hope to guard against the attribution of project effects that are merely incidental and not proven consequences. A classic example of just such a case may be found in the reversed learner-migration from the formerly disadvantaged schools discussed above. In all impact assessments, one needs to take the context of the intervention into account. By the same token, one needs to take into account the fact that schools associated with an external intervention of one kind or another tend to gain some political and social clout. This is apart from what a project may or may not do. Simply put, the determination of a project's benefits is a more complex process than prima facie it may appear to be. It is for this reason that we advocate a judicious utilisation of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in project impact studies.

8.2 The PROSPER Impact Study: A consideration of sector-wide outcomes

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This paper deals with an assessment of the impact of the **Project for Special Purpose English in Romania (PROSPER)**.

The paper elucidates the approach employed in the evaluation intended to gauge the impact made by **PROSPER** on the ESP teaching/learning process and on the various stakeholders participating in the project. The paper outlines the underlying methodology of the impact assessment and highlights findings pertaining to the differences made by **PROSPER** to participating teachers, students, former students, managers, employers, foreign language departments and participating educational institutions from both Romania and the UK.

In addition to measuring the impact of the project, the paper makes specific reference to sectoral impact. It refers to the ways in which the *ripple* effects of **PROSPER** impacted broadly on the sector – and even on institutions which were not participating in **PROSPER**.

The first part of the paper draws attention to the methods which were used to identify areas of impact focus. It also examines the criteria underlying the development of research instruments and makes reference to the way in which the national evaluation was administered.

The latter part outlines the findings of the investigation and the impact made – both intended and unintended – on the various stakeholders. Specific reference is also made to the significant ripple effect engendered by **PROSPER** in the broader ESP sector in both local and regional contexts.

1 PROSPER's aims and objectives

PROSPER was set up in 1991 with the expressed aim of upgrading the teaching/learning of ESP in major tertiary educational institutions in Romania. The project was seen as being indispensable to improving the English proficiency of students who would one day be members of some of the key professions in the Romanian economy, such as engineering, economics and medicine. The design of **PROSPER** took account of prevailing conditions and the limits on resources. The project framework was developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders who contributed to the formulation of the project's purpose and goals as well as to the outputs necessary for their achievement. One major decision, taken at the outset, was that the project would deal with ESP on a national rather than on a regional or institutional level. It was felt that this *going-to-scale* would achieve a greater impact.

The project started by initially involving six major higher education institutions from across Romania – five Polytechnic universities and the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest. After 1991, the project gradually expanded to include the English departments in the faculties of economics and medicine of various universities in Romania. In total, 16 institutions participated in the programme and 124 teachers received various types of **PROSPER** training.

The project's aim was to be achieved by:

- providing UK and in-country training in communicative methodology for ESP teachers
- firstly, developing skills in ESP curriculum development, course design, materials development and, thereafter, by providing on-going support for teachers in these areas
- establishing ESP resource centres at identified institutions
- encouraging networking among ESP practitioners in Romania through the medium of national conferences and regular meetings
- encouraging networking among ESP counterparts in other countries through the medium of international conferences and a newsletter

Although it was obvious, during the years of project implementation, that **PROSPER** was making significant achievements in a variety of areas that relate to teachers' professional expertise, it became evident that it was necessary to attempt a formal estimation of these achievements and to assess the participants' perceptions of these achievements of their own practices. It was therefore decided to embark on a full-scale impact study which would include all **PROSPER** teachers (whether respondents or researchers, or both). It is believed that an impact study of this magnitude and nature might be the first ESP evaluation of this kind in Europe. Local teachers, in consultation with Prof. Charles Alderson of the University of

Lancaster, undertook to implement the investigation. Through this association, teachers were drawn into all stages of the impact study, from the actual project design stage through to the verification and final documentation of the findings.

2 Identifying areas of project impact

The collaborative group of *teacher-researchers* concurred that the impact study should be undertaken on a national scale and that it should review all the main areas of ESP. It was agreed that one of the main goals of **PROSPER** was the professionalisation[1] of teachers. It was suggested that this aim would be further enhanced if teachers were to be engaged to participate in the impact investigation.

The collection of data which would reflect the impact of **PROSPER** on all categories of stakeholders and across all the relevant project areas – including ESP teaching methods, materials development, management, and so on – was considered necessary for the national investigation. Although the impact study was designed to identify changes that were anticipated in the project document, it was also designed to identify and document *unpredicted* and *unexpected* changes. This was to ensure that the investigation obtained evidence of impact from as many levels as possible. Its findings would thus be even more comprehensive and significant. The focus of the impact project was therefore broadened to include not only the individual participants, project classrooms and project-based institutions: in addition, it was directed to examine possible impact on the ESP sector and on the profession in general. The investigation was therefore extended to examine any *ripple effect* the project might have had on other parts of society.

21 Defining the focus

An initial brainstorming exercise was conducted to identify the kind of impact **PROSPER** might have had and to establish which locations should be examined as sites of project impact. The brainstorming exercise was carried out with the members of the impact study team, and took account of their own perceptions, as well as on the results of similar brainstorming exercises which they had carried out in their own departments or institutions.

PROSPER was expected to have made the following kinds of impact on the various sites or stakeholders:

1 Professionalisation here refers to their ESP teaching abilities, their abilities in doing research, in materials, course and curriculum design and also to their own perceptions of being *professional* as was evidenced by their self-evaluation

Site of impact	FORMS OF IMPACT IDENTIFIED IN THE BRAINSTORM SESSIONS
Classrooms	• Teaching methods should shift to being more learner-centred • The roles of teachers and students should become more dialogical
Teachers	• Teachers should use more communicative teaching methods • Teachers should develop a wide range of professional skills • There should be increased co-operation among teachers
Students	• Student participation should increase • Students employability should be enhanced
Materials and resources	• The project should publish at least three (locally) produced textbooks
Tests	• Teachers on the project should be enabled to use a diversity of appropriate methods for assessing learners competencies
ESP institutions	• The status of ESP teachers within institutions should be enhanced
Creation of new institutions	• There should be an increase in the number of language centres
Other projects in the region	• There should be broad dissemination of documentation pertaining to the project • Project achievements should be publicised • There should be increased interaction between local project members and their counterparts in British universities • There should be broad dissemination of materials produced by the project

It is obvious from the above list of possible areas of impact and from the diverse nature of the stakeholders, that the impact was expected to be much broader than was initially anticipated (or documented) in the original aims of **PROSPER**.

As will be discussed in section 4, the impact on stakeholders was indeed found to be much broader than was initially anticipated. For example, if the original aim was to upgrade the teaching of English by training teachers in a communicative ESP methodology, the findings showed that the impact on teachers was much broader than that which had been suggested when the project aim had been formulated. Teachers not only improved their classroom teaching skills; they also developed a repertoire of skills which contributed to a higher level of professionalism. Teachers displayed increased accomplishments in material writing, lesson presentation, research and entrepreneurial skills. Apart from individual achievements, **PROSPER** created a sense of commitment and an awareness of a common cause among its participants. This *collectiveness* contributed to the development of a professional community of ESP teachers – a collectivity with its own identity, which was able to work towards the achievement of shared goals.

3 Research approach

When the impact assessment team designed the research approach, they found that it was necessary to make the above list of criteria operationalisable through categorising criteria and then using the resultant categories as the basis for items to be included in the various instruments. To give one example, the *Classroom Observation Chart* designed for this assessment was used to collect data about what actually happens in classes – thereby detecting trends in the teaching/learning process. This chart enabled researchers to identify those areas in which the project had made a significant impact as well as those areas in which improvement was still required. The following features of a good **PROSPER** classroom were identified (they were based on the perceptions of teachers who had been involved in the conceptualisation of the project and its accompanying philosophy):

- There is increased student involvement in classroom decisions.
- Teachers focus more on teaching skills than on language structures.
- A wide range of learning tasks and materials which focus on communication are used.
- Increased classroom interaction is evidenced by pair and group work.
- Teachers exhibit effective classroom management skills.
- Teachers use a diverse range of techniques for the correction of errors.
- Teachers maintain a collaborative classroom atmosphere and this encourages students to take the initiative.

These features were included in the observation instrument. In many cases, it was necessary to make the feature operationalisable by breaking down the characteristic into a checklist of types of activities which could be used to demonstrate the achievement of competence. Questions based on the observation sheet were included in the teachers' and students' questionnaires and were used as a means of triangulating the data.

In addition to the triangulation of data, the project team attempted to ensure that all findings could be compared with comparable data which was usually drawn from the baseline study or from non-project institutions.

The first set of instruments was administered across the board, both to project and non-project institutions and to respondents. These instruments included the:

- **Student questionnaire**
  This was designed to explore the attitudes of students and their perceptions of changes/improvements.
  It was administered to 1039 PROSPER and 449 non-PROSPER respondents

- **Teacher questionnaire**
  This focused on teaching abilities and on the development of teaching skills.
  This was administered to 104 PROSPER and 51 non-PROSPER teachers.

- **Teacher questionnaire and focus group interviews**
  These explored perceptions of the way in which PROSPER was managed.
  A project management questionnaire was designed by the management team in conjunction with the researchers. PROSPER members were required to record their perceptions on the effectiveness of the project management.
  This was administered to 98 PROSPER teachers across 8 institutions

- **Classroom observation chart**
  The chart contained a checklist of teaching/learning activities which could be observed.
  59 PROSPER and 25 non-PROSPER classes were observed and rated in terms of the checklist.

- **Ex-student questionnaire**
  This was intended to track former students and to compare their abilities and employment opportunities with former students who were not part of the PROSPER project.
  This was administered to 101 PROSPER and 51 non-PROSPER respondents.

- **Employer questionnaire**
  This questionnaire was aimed at the employers of former students and was intended to ascertain their perceptions of the abilities of PROSPER students.
  This was administered to 46 respondents.

- **Documentary analysis of tests and materials**

  It was necessary to undertake an evaluation/analysis of the various kinds of materials (including textbooks, class tests) that were used during the PROSPER programme and to compare these with those used before the project intervention and those used by institutions not involved in the project.
  A comparative analysis of 58 PROSPER, 15 pre-PROSPER and 17 non-PROSPER tests was done.
  A comparative analysis of 2 PROSPER, 1 non-PROSPER and 2 pre-PROSPER textbooks was carried out.

- **Case studies**

  A case study analysis aimed at tracking former students and evaluating their abilities in their places of employment.
  4 PROSPER and 4 non-PROSPER cases were examined.

- **Descriptions of ripple effects and confirmation of their impact was carried out.**

  6 different types of statements were analysed. (This is discussed in more detail in section 3.1 below.)

31 Measuring the unintended outcomes

Since it was evident that the project had achieved many outcomes which were not previously anticipated, it decided that the research design should make a specific effort to identify and measure those outcomes which had not been anticipated at the inception of the project.

Since the ripple effects were broad and varied, the project team conceptualised an approach which could be used to *measure* and *validify* the diversity of outcomes that were identified. It was decided that one instrument could not be used across the spectrum of outcomes. When the researchers identified an *unintended outcome*, they wrote a brief description of the *outcome* and the *impact* that it might have made. This description was given to those participants who were affected by the outcome and they were required to complete, modify, confirm or disconfirm the description as they thought appropriate. The amended versions were then used as a measure of these outcomes.

It was found that this method of identifying and *measuring* the impact of unintended outcomes gave insight into the magnitude of the **PROSPER** project. The list was long and varied. Much of the information gained in this way was useful in documenting the impact and recommendations for future practice.

4 Sector-wide outcomes

PROSPER was responsible for impacting on the sector in a number of different ways. The most salient of these are:

- **The impact of devolved project management**
  Many of the outcomes of the project management impacted on the sector insofar as they had implications for other projects in the region and/or for the management structure of British Council projects in general. These outcomes were discerned in the process of interpreting the data collected through the various stages of the research process.

  For example, the findings on the management of **PROSPER** appeared to be relevant to project institutions and to the British Council management who had been associated with **PROSPER** during its implementation. The findings thus have relevance for the management of similar projects elsewhere.

  One of the notable features of management was that all project members were involved in all the stages of project design. This meant that the implementation was based on the joint decisions of project members. The **PROSPER** experience has shown that the incorporation of this local component into the project management does much to build in a sense of ownership. As an unintended consequence, devolved decision-making seemed to extend to other projects in the region (like the Ukraine baseline studies) or to other similar projects being implemented in Russia. The local management promoted from within the *project family* maintains the sense of project ownership, and increased local ownership of project responsibilities – budgetary as well as academic.

- **The shift from outside control towards local ownership**
  The idea of local control was extended beyond the realms of the **PROSPER** project to other unrelated projects in the sector. In several cases, previously London-appointed positions were transferred to local teachers who had been empowered to fill these positions.

- **Consultative mechanisms**
  One of the successful structures created by **PROSPER** for consulting its members is the annual heads of department meeting. This structure was replicated elsewhere, as, for example, by the Uni-schools project in Romania, and it has also inspired the adoption of focus groups and national consultation groups.

- **Regional networking**
  The creation of a national team, which all **PROSPER** teachers perceive as the main achievement of the project, has strengthened the importance of teamwork for achieving and maintaining quality standards. A regional ESP network was created and has been sustained since 1994. Different countries taking turns in organising

annual meetings. Even some western countries have recently adopted the idea of regional networks. The Anti-Conference in Switzerland is one such example. The value of these networks for disseminating information and planning joint events is immense and as the feedback from participants who attend the regional meetings suggest, **PROSPER** has been a source of inspiration and an explicit model for new regional developments.

- **Materials development**
  Material writing by national teams is one such development which has inspired other projects in the region. The advisers of the ESP project in Hungary have confirmed that, in addition to using the **PROSPER** materials as a basis for teacher development, the Romanian experience has raised awareness of the feasibility and desirability of adopting a team-based approach to material development.

- **Increased professional skills**
  The variety of project events and the involvement of project members in decision-making have led to the development of a whole range of professional skills. Among these is the increase in teachers' self-confidence and the development of teachers' organisational and managerial skills. These necessitate a special mention since they have implications for project sustainability.

- **The establishment of other language centres**
  The Language Centres (LANGCEN) project, which was born out of **PROSPER**, has founded a group of five language centres which function as self-funding service units at different points in the country.

- **International impact**
  The British institutions which have been associated with the project have also been affected by their need to respond to the requirements of **PROSPER**. The Institute for English Language Education at Lancaster University, which was involved in the design phase of the project, responded by making a number of changes to their courses. They now continually develop and adapt the courses offered to **PROSPER** teachers and take the diverse and changing needs of the five groups who attended their courses over the project lifespan into account.

  Manchester University, responsible for the delivery of a series of distance-learning modules which lead to an M Ed degree, has constantly revised its distance delivery style and the content of modules which were designed for Romania.

- **Code of project practice**
  Finally, it might be argued, on the basis of the outcomes claimed by the project, that **PROSPER** made a significant, and to some extent, a global impact on project practice in the Council. One of the outcomes of this impact was that a code of practice for grant-funded project management was created.

5 Conclusion

The findings of this impact study reflect the kinds of changes that have taken place in the ESP profession in Romania through the influence of **PROSPER**. Although the study reflects the complexity of ESP teaching and learning in a particular country, it may also attain to a wider relevance by contributing to a better understanding of the project approach and to managing innovation in ELT and in education in general. The research process itself may be of relevance to teachers who are involved in educational projects and who may wish to study the effects of those projects in detail. The impact study, like many other **PROSPER** developments, calls for reflection on the nature of the teaching profession and on what seem to be false boundaries between teachers, academics, researchers, and course and materials designers. The teachers involved in educational projects and processes of innovation may (as the project shows) take on quite complex and unexpected roles.

8.3 Research and evaluation in DPEP: A review of current practices and future strategies in impact assessment

Roopa Joshi
District Primary Education Programme
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In this paper, Roopa Joshi attempts to provide a review of a critical area of project management in the **District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)**, namely that of the practices and strategies employed in the assessment of project outcomes. She illuminates three issues which the assessment was intended to address:

- Firstly, it was necessary to address the question of *how* the **DPEP** impact assessment model should be designed. The *how*, she suggests, refers to the design on both a conceptual and operational level.
- Secondly, it was necessary to consider the content and range of existing **DPEP** practice as it manifested across the various states and at various levels of decision-making. In terms of this, it was pertinent to establish *how* this practice might influence the various stakeholders of the project.
- And thirdly, it is necessary to consider *what* the possible way forward might be for **DPEP** in the arena of assessment research. Her paper elaborates on these issues.

1 Introduction

This paper attempts to provide a review of a critical area of project management in **DPEP**, namely that of the practices and strategies used in the assessment of project outcomes. It has the following three-fold focus:

Firstly, the paper begins by highlighting how the issue of assessing project outcomes is contextualised in terms of the goals of the project. The analysis therefore covers key elements of strategy that are built into project design and that operationalise both on-line and intervention-specific project impact studies that are undertaken within **DPEP**.

Secondly, the paper looks at current practices in the assessment of project impact prevalent across the entire area of **DPEP's** intervention in India, and it considers whether decentralised structures have internalised project management skills intrinsic to the spirit of **DPEP**. In other words, it considers whether project management skills have been disseminated to those project managers who are involved in the decentralised structures.

Finally, the paper looks at possible alternatives for strengthening initiatives for project impact assessment.

2 Monitoring of project impact in DPEP

An integral component of the **DPEP** project design is that of research and evaluation. From the outset of the programme, research findings make an important contribution to guiding the strategies which will be employed. This is evident right in the pre-implementation phase, in the form of baseline and social assessment studies for the project districts. Ongoing research and evaluation were also crucial during project implementation. The research and evaluation component enabled the project to:

- plan, implement and monitor initiatives for the promotion of research and evaluation at all levels (i.e. the national, district, sub-district levels) within the project as well as (perhaps more importantly) at school levels, where teachers were involved in action research
- extend support to endeavours for capacity building in training programmes which aimed to enable practitioners to do evaluation and action research, and to grasp the rudiments of research methodology
- conduct/commission specific evaluations for the requirements of project implementers
- undertake a dissemination of findings and the outcomes of research exercises
- encourage networking between the larger research community in various institutions and universities and **DPEP** so as to encourage these institutions and to provide an opportunity for researchers to carry out research in elementary education.

It should, however, be kept in mind, that the framework and areas for evaluation differed across various levels in the **DPEP** structure according to whether the focus was on a national, state, district or sub-district level.

Accordingly, the impact assessment was integrated into the various **DPEP** project activities and was operationalised across states as well as on a national level.

21 Assessment at the national level

At the national level, examples of evaluation studies include the evaluation of:

- project management
- institutional development (various aspects of institutional capacity building)
- community participation
- access, enrolment and retention through periodic surveys
- teacher training
- classroom processes

2.1.1 Differentiating between different levels of impact

The expected outcomes of the evaluation studies differed according to the perceptions/requirements at different levels of project management. For instance, it is likely that an evaluation of the delivery of teacher training at a *district* level would focus on the planning, organisation and actual delivery of the training programme. It would also focus on transmission losses, teachers' perceptions, motivation, feedback and issues pertaining to the sustainability of the training programme.

An investigation into a similar project at *state* level would require that the investigation to focus on adequacy of preparation, the participation of targeted beneficiaries, the quality of the course content, the enhancement of trainees' skills, the competence of the master trainers, and so on.

At a *national* level, concerns would be differ from those of observations conducted at state or district levels. For example, a national evaluation would be concerned with whether, or the extent to which, there had been an improvement in the learners' competencies, or on the type of corrective measures (e.g. improvements in logistics or in the curriculum) that would be required if the delivery of training programmes at all levels were to improve.

What I have said above emphasises how important it is for effective project managers to be able to adapt the use of assessment instruments for the varying situational contexts in which assessments are conducted at state or district levels. The question as to whether processes to build capacity for impact assessment (other than with on-line monitoring) have been addressed within project structures, is an important question which will be considered in the final section of this paper.

3 Current practices of project impact in DPEP

Much effort went into developing evaluation plans for assessment that were to be undertaken at national and state levels. This necessitated that consideration be given to what was currently being done in **DPEP** and (thereafter) to what should actually be evaluated. A national workshop on evaluation was held in 1995. The workshop identified the following priority areas for evaluation in **DPEP**. It also indicated which aspects should assessed.

3.1 Priority areas for assessment

Priority areas for evaluation	ASPECTS ASSESSED
Training	• The quality of teacher and instructor training. This included assessment to determine the extent of the dilution of the training that may have resulted from the cascade model of training.
Management training	• The training that was offered to enskill managers as well as the training which was presented to members of village education committees
Decentralised and participatory management	• The functioning of district and state programme management units
Community mobilisation and participation	• The functioning of village education committees and an assessment of the flow of information, and the way that information is used at different levels. This includes a consideration of the efficacy of the management information system.
Institutional development	• Resource institutions such as district evaluation teams and other resource and administrative institutions
School functioning and effectiveness	• The pedagogical processes as well as the supply and utilisation of materials
Access and enrolment	• These are assessed by way of an analysis of data from education management information systems, through the use of case studies and also through an assessment of learners' achievements.

3.2 Evaluations conducted at a national level

The following list of what was evaluated a national level concurs with the above table.

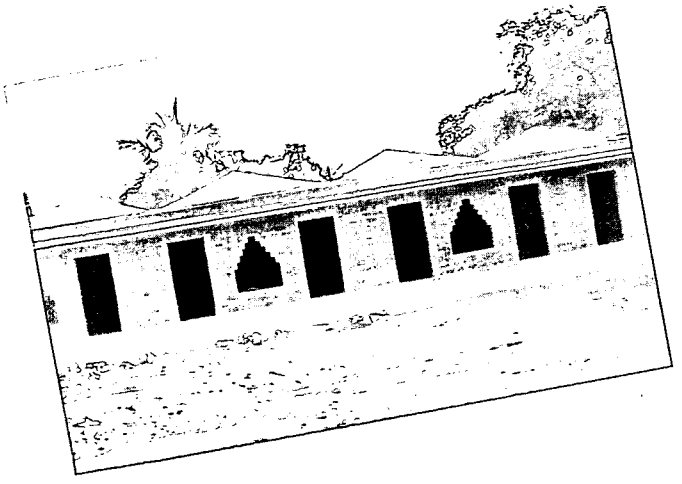
What was evaluated was:

- managerial structure and processes under **DPEP**
- institutional development of State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) and DIETs
- classroom processes
- a survey of learners' mid-term achievements
- learners' access and retention
- community participation in **DPEP**
- teacher grants and school grants
- interventions for improving the education of the *girl child*
- the external evaluation of civil works
- in-service teacher training

3.3 Sample monitoring

Along with various monitoring and evaluation techniques employed at the national and state level, a form of sample monitoring was also conducted in three **DPEP** states. Components of the monitoring and evaluation of the sample districts included:

- a review and analysis of the information that was gathered periodically from the sample districts through the **DPEP** management information system
- a review and analysis of the quantitative studies undertaken by the **DPEP** Bureau in the sample districts
- an intensive follow-up of the implementation of the Joint Supervision Missions' recommendations made in the sample districts
- designing a set of activities to monitor and evaluate
  - (1) the techniques, measures and processes adopted by the sample districts
  - (2) the process of change in classroom practices and improvements in school effectiveness



Anticipated/unanticipated outcomes

Different strands in the evaluation of **AP-DPEP** were developed with the assistance of DFID in 1996. These are the introduction of the annual *Schools and Pupils Survey*, a set of short- and long-term qualitative studies, and a set of process indicators of implementation for use in planning and evaluation for conducting fast, large-scale qualitative monitoring activities which can be aggregated across districts.

3.4 How do states address evaluation issues?

Almost all of the 14 states involved in the **DPEP** intervention have undergone an assessment of various processes which were initiated in the first three years of the implementation. This assessment occurred at the national level as well as at the level of state specific initiatives.

Positive evidence arising out of this was a heightened awareness of the importance of evaluation and project impact assessment. This was obvious from the array of interventions that were proposed and from the efforts made by some states (albeit on a limited scale) to increase their internal capacity to do evaluation.

While Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Assam, Madhya Pradesh have been shown to be initiatives which have increased the capacities of district and sub-district institutional structures, states such as Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Orissa have incorporated their state apex organisations (such as the State Councils of Educational Research and Training) into such efforts.

The capacity for doing action research and an improved understanding of research methods was one of the outcomes of research training which was presented. This training was also presented by national apex authorities such as the NCERT and the Research and Evaluation Studies Unit of EDCIL, New Delhi.

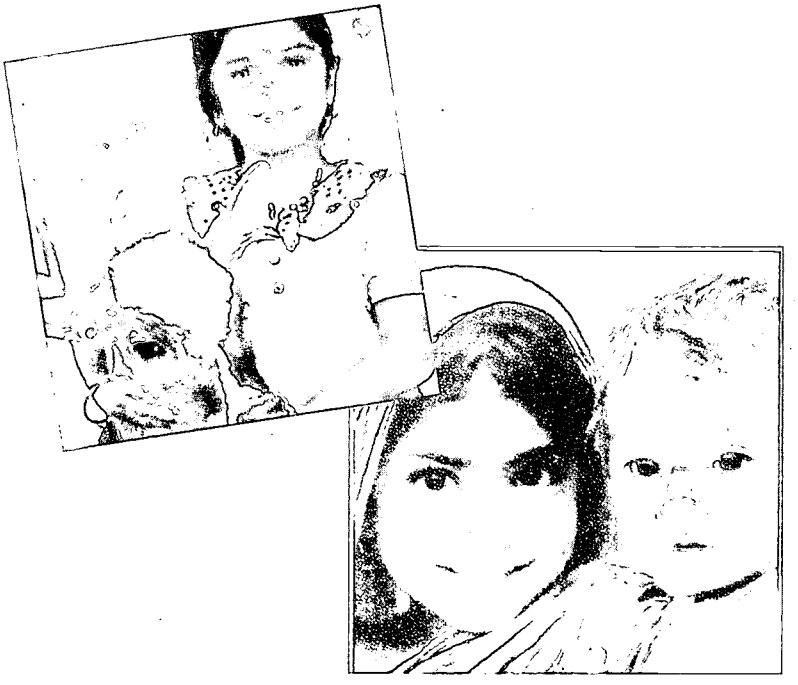
There is no doubt that **DPEP** has provided an opportunity for generating better research activities that will eventually contribute to better programme management and implementation.

4 Future strategies and issues for project impact

This paper has looked at project impact assessment and evaluation in the context of **DPEP** by focusing on coverage as well and programmes designed to enhance skills. It must, however, be remembered that the **DPEP** ethos is anchored in initiating educational reform through *process-led change,* thereby providing a platform for generating positive spin-offs for sector-wide, institutional outcomes in the country. Evidence suggests that it is equally critical that the structures in project management and implementation be sufficiently flexible and decentralised to encourage process-specific outcomes. This would in turn provide an opportunity for networking between larger subsets of stakeholders in the programme, namely teachers, institutions, community and programme implementers. It is contended that the involvement of these subsets of stakeholders would most certainly make a significant impact on the achievement of sector-specific outcomes.

Alternative approaches that might enhance the use of project impact assessment in **DPEP** could be considered. It is possible, for example, that an extension of the capacity for research and evaluation skills to as many states as possible would increase the quality and quantity of such assessments. Another approach might involve the development of a list of priority areas and a framework for various research designs which could be conducted on a systematic basis. This might be effected by developing the skills of participants deployed in states, districts and sub-district levels with the help of research organisations. A third possibility would be to provide criteria which would ensure that project impact assessment is sustainable. This would mean that the scale of operations, particularly at the district and sub-district level, would have to be of a sufficient magnitude to allow replicable cost-effective studies to be conducted.

Project impact assessment in the context of **DPEP** would therefore need to be strengthened at all levels of project management, namely at national, state, district and sub-district levels. For this purpose external and independent assessments of evaluation would be required and there would also be a need to draw existing institutional resources into evaluations. Because such a process would ensure that institutional structures would provide inputs for design and capacity building skills, such structures would be drawn into programme implementation on a sustained basis.



5 Conclusion

The effectiveness of **DPEP** lies in its complementary use of strategies and holistic interventions. Impact assessment is only one of the tools which enables project implementers and stakeholders to obtain a measure of the progress of the project towards achieving its goals. If one were to

consolidate the impact from a programme such as **DPEP**, it would enhance the impact that arises from participation among all stakeholders. This would be particularly true at those decentralised levels where the goals of the programme will ultimately be realised. This is a crucial aspect of **DPEP**'s mission and should not be forgotten.

84 Concluding comments from the DFID Education Division

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For DFID this Forum provided a welcome sharing of insider and outsider perspectives on the key questions that can arise in the planning, design, management and implementation of impact studies. It drew attention to the hard choices that have to be addressed by the stakeholders involved in impact assessment. Issues concerning timing, time frame, availability of finance, duration, selection of impact evaluation researchers, capacity building strategy, report writing, dissemination and ownership, may lead to compromises in the organisation, scope and scale of the exercise.

The Forum provided a constructive focus for Education Advisers in DFID by emphasising some of the key elements in the Post Jomtien learning agenda, in which participatory impact assessment features prominently as a formative approach to evaluating impact. The implications for project ownership, capacity building and sustainability emerged as an underlying theme throughout the Forum. Speaking from a formative (rather than a summative) standpoint, John Shotton reminded us that the objectives of a participatory impact assessment can be:

- to gauge the extent to which a programme has led to desired changes in the target audience and field
- to determine whether or not, and to what extent, a programme might have met its objectives
- to engage local ownership and leadership within a context of decentralisation of programme management and implementation
- to enable the different perceptions and interests of stakeholders in a project to be taken into account when planning any subsequent follow-up or a new phase

- to develop capacity building skills through facilitating local applied research, which, in turn, will enhance social discourse about relevant learning centre-based issues

Although the Forum demonstrated that DFID Education Advisers have been using participatory approaches in several projects in different parts of the world, Veronica McKay's participatory action research model provided us with an expanded vision of the many potential benefits for those associated with the project. The wide range of ways in which it can be formative and capacity building through

- enabling all participants to become co-researchers
- enabling all participants to define the criteria used for assessment
- involving the participants in interpreting and authenticating the findings
- engaging the participants in the cycle of reflection/action/reflection
- enabling the poor or marginalised to impact on policy
- enabling bureaucracies to become more participatory

provides DFID with a convincing case for using this approach for empowering project stakeholders.

At this point it may be helpful to sound a cautionary note. In using evaluation of project impact as a formative tool, we may encounter problems when we try to generate the relevant skills and enthusiasm for the exercise. It was pointed out that some people may be reluctant to take part, particularly if they have not had any previous experience of this kind of approach. Involving people from poorer, grass-roots communities may be problematic if they feel inhibited about having to work with people with whom they would not normally have had any close contact. In spite of such difficulties, DFID needs to persevere in finding culturally sensitive ways of engaging such key stakeholders in the process.

Such risks must be considered against the potential benefits. A participatory action research approach is an on-going assessment of project impact. It encourages teachers to develop the habit of continually reflecting on their effectiveness. Project players, project monitors, evaluators and learners can come together to decide what constitutes best practice. A participatory action research approach may therefore empower the evaluation in such a way that it offers enhanced project impact sustainability. The significance of participatory evaluation of programmes was reinforced by the examples Alan Peacock gave of using this approach as a means for teacher professional development in South Africa and Sri Lanka. The value of participant development of impact criteria was contrasted with the negative risks (or inappropriate dependency) that can arise from recourse to external consultants for this purpose.

One problem that emerged from several contributions to the Forum concerns the time factor. This relates to both the time-tabling of the exercise (which may be dictated by budgetary considerations), and the actual time-schedule that is adopted for the conduct of the exercise (which may likewise be influenced by a financial imperative). The timing of any evaluation, particularly those using a participatory approach to impact

assessment, may crucially affect the quality and validity of the outcome of the exercise. Given the tension between the availability of funding for an impact assessment, and the time needed for an adequate assessment to be undertaken, DFID is urged to take both aspects of the time factor into greater consideration in project planning and project design. The following conclusions became apparent:

- Unless the timing of the assessment allows an adequate period for the programme outcomes to be realised, the formative aspect of a participatory approach to the impact study may be undermined.

- Sufficient time needs to be allocated at the onset of an impact study in order to engage all the main stakeholders and enable them to participate. Time is needed to build up trust and confidence in the exercise. Time is also needed if potential language and cultural barriers that may prevent everyone from participating fully are to be overcome.

- Time needs to be set aside for training key project personnel in participatory action research methods.

- Reporting time at the end of the exercise needs to be factored in if the various perceptions, priorities and expectations of different audiences are to be accommodated.

- The time period allocated for the impact assessment may need to be adjusted once the scope and scale of what realistically can be undertaken becomes apparent. Insufficient time undermines the qualitative validity of the impact assessment and also allows no margin for any unforeseen external events that might impinge on the exercise to be dealt with.

The conclusion drawn from the Forum is that impact studies vary in scope, depth and scale, according to when they take place. An impact study can be conducted during a project as a formative means for reinforcing commitment to the implementation of project objectives. It can also take place towards the end of a project to demonstrate to different stakeholders the qualitative and quantitative value of being associated with the achievement of project outputs. In addition, long-term project impact can be researched some time after the end of the project as a way of examining whether or not project outcomes have proved to be sustainable. In DFID this last option can be adopted by the Evaluation Department - depending on whether or not there will be sufficient funds for following up on what the project completion report has recommended.

The Forum was enriched by the direct experience which several participants had gained in baseline studies in very different project contexts in India, Nicaragua, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Central and Eastern Europe. According to DFID procedures, baseline studies should be factored into the project design either before, or at the start of a project if planning and/or assessing subsequent progress and impact is to be made. Carol Moloney justified her argument that 'A baseline assessment is a wondrous thing!' by listing the wide range of purposes that baseline studies fulfil. It is therefore constructive for Education Advisers to note that baseline studies can be used

- to set the scene for involving all stakeholders at the onset by ensuring that there is shared understanding of programme objectives and context.

- to provide an initial assessment mechanism (or benchmark) against which subsequent evaluations can be measured.

- to serve as an in-depth needs analysis, fine-tuning basic objectives set in log frames in the light of unforeseen issues or developments.

- to foster greater ownership of the programme through necessitating a high degree of collaboration in the baseline assessment.

- to emphasise delivery 'at the chalkface' right from the start of the programme by focusing on the school or classroom in which baseline data needs to be collected.

- to serve as a reform tool in itself by giving department officials, college lecturers and teachers the opportunity to develop skills of assessing and supporting teachers in a shared learning environment.

The Forum concluded that sufficient time, finance and resources need to be made available for baseline studies so that a comprehensive range of initial perspectives and data from a variety of sources may be captured. It is essential to ensure that the baseline study provides an adequate benchmark for whatever evaluation may be undertaken in future (irrespective of whether this may be formative or summative, or conducted by 'insiders' or 'outsiders' to the project).

It emerged from Forum discussion that, in participatory action research, it is more appropriate to refer to stakeholder evaluation, rather than to use the outmoded terminology of the pre-Jomtien era in which donors were juxtaposed with recipients or beneficiaries. The presentation by Dermot Murphy and Pauline Rea-Dickins defined stakeholders in terms of power differentials, such as knowledge, expertise, control, budget control, responsibility, benefits, loyalty, status and distance. The conclusion for DFID is that understanding such stakeholder perspectives will enable us to plan and organise impact studies more effectively, and will promote more and better use of their findings. It was evident that responsibility for different stages of the impact assessment needs to be placed at the appropriate level where decisions will be most effectively taken. Like any other evaluation exercise, impact assessment has to be carefully planned and managed so that it is not undermined by funding or time restrictions.

Stakeholder analysis raises the question of insider/outsider involvement in participatory evaluation. The distinction between insiders/outsiders to a project emerged from the workshop as more pertinent to impact assessment than the original distinction in our workshop programme between national researchers and external researchers. There was consensus among workshop participants that there is no place for fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) consultants in impact studies - given that the emphasis in participatory impact assessment is on training stakeholders in the necessary research skills to investigate project impact themselves.

The question of who should be involved in impact evaluation can be both politically and culturally sensitive. Not only should the stakeholders involved reflect a cross section of those with an interest in the project's outputs, but the selection of such researchers must ultimately depend on those inside the project. Given that the nomination of those involved (and ultimately those who should represent them at any presentation of the findings) is crucial to the success of the exercise, the Forum concluded that those inside a project are better placed to make such decisions.

Identifying the level and strength of project impact calls for qualitative as well as quantitative research methods. Participants at the Forum agreed that, in impact evaluation, the process is as important as the product of the exercise because of the enhanced role that is attributed to researchers inside the project. More emphasis needs to be placed by DFID on training trainers in participatory research methods if impact is to be evaluated effectively from an insider perspective. It is only possible to assess the long-term impact of a project after it has ended. In consequence, empowering learning communities to undertake impact research could address the option of leaving the assessment of project impact until some time after agency support has been withdrawn. For DFID, the practical conclusion is that different impacts may be experienced by different stakeholders at different points, either during or after the project cycle.

It was encouraging to note widespread acceptance of the significance of unanticipated as well as anticipated benefits. The DFID Glossary of Aid Terms points out that "only planned, positive impacts will be included in the Logical Framework". Although DFID has to work on the assumption that planned impacts will be positive rather than negative, Education Division's experience that unplanned impacts can add an invaluable qualitative dimension to the benefits anticipated in the project logframe, was borne out by Mfanwenkosi Malaza's case study material from the Mpumamalanga Primary Schools Initiative in South Africa. Mohammed Melouk provided another dimension by referring to the different attitudinal agendas and perceptions of those involved in a project as side effects, linked to predicted and unpredicted outcomes.

Another aspect that DFID needs to take into account when identifying the key stakeholders in a project, is the question of dissemination strategy. This should be built into project or programme design. Impact studies inevitably give rise to the question of the audience for whom the findings of the evaluation are intended. The dissemination strategy has to take into consideration who will be involved in writing the report, who will read it and to what extent it will be readily available to all stakeholders?

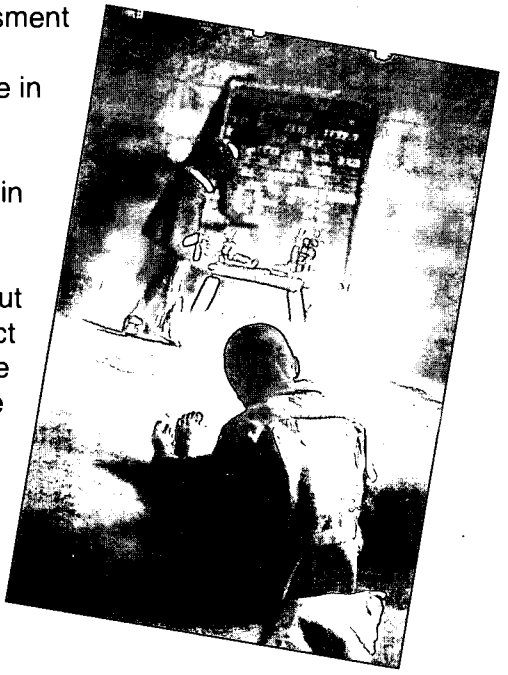
Clara Ines Rubiano and Dermot Murphy drew DFID's attention to the different stages at which reporting can be undertaken, as well as the multiple audiences who will require feedback from the impact study. N.V. Varghese thought that stakeholder workshops should be organised for such reporting, but reminded DFID of the importance of working out how the findings should be presented. The question of multiple audiences raises the question of whether there should be one report or several reports? DFID's conclusion is that different types of reports may be necessary when there are aspects of the impact study that some audiences may need to

appreciate in greater depth or detail, in order to ensure that the outcomes can be followed up or made more sustainable. Some reporting may benefit from a comparative framework or from a DFID/nonDFID perspective. It could be constructive to share and compare patterns emerging from impact studies - such as the implications for institutional practices.

During the Forum it was reiterated that it would be to the advantage of all stakeholders if more of the lessons which have been learned could be shared across projects. Projects and programmes would benefit from a greater cross-fertilisation of information about similar experiences. Although it was recognised that this Forum provided a useful opportunity to discuss issues arising from impact studies in a variety of different contexts, DFID was asked to concentrate more effort on sharing expertise across projects by promoting south/south collaboration and experience in impact study research. It would contribute to the demystification of impact studies if they were more readily available in the public domain.

Although the Forum covered the majority of key issues in impact evaluation, it also exposed areas that could be researched in more depth. These include the advantages and disadvantages of using project logframes, the balance between personal, institutional and sector wide outcomes, and the inter-relationship between social, educational, institutional and economic criteria in impact assessment. Mirela Bardi pointed out that there is also scope for closer examination of the instruments used in impact research, and that this is a topic that could be explored in more depth in a future workshop.

The Forum highlighted the value of impact assessment as an empowering process for stakeholders in a project or programme for whom it can be formative in a capacity building way that helps to reinforce a sense of ownership. It was realised that good communication channels between those involved in the impact assessment are essential, because information sharing and feedback fosters greater transparency. Education Division's conviction about the value of a participatory approach to impact assessment was reinforced by the Forum. The discussion drew attention to the complexity of the process and emphasised the many benefits that it holds for funding agencies, primarily because of the way in which a formative approach to impact assessment clarifies project ownership for all parties concerned. It therefore has the potential added value of making project achievements more sustainable.



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