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EVALUATION OF LITERACY PROGRAMMES

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of literacy has undergone a rapid change in recent years. No longer is literacy equated with the learning of the 3 R's alone, but is viewed as a major, even indispensable means of promoting the vital interests of the individual and the community. The focus has thus clearly shifted from the emphasis on literacy per se to a broader concept of adult education.

This new understanding of the emerging concept of literacy has now permeated the policy-making process of most countries. Consequently, literacy and adult education programmes have been designed to respond to national goals and priorities and there is increasing evidence to directly link literacy and adult education programmes to developmental activities.

But while a great leap forward has been made in the new understanding of the goals of literacy, evaluation of literacy and adult education programmes has not kept pace with this progress. For it would be a truism to state that the current status of evaluation of literacy/adult education programmes is largely unimpressive and that greater efforts will have to be made to strengthen this activity in the near future.
Present Status of Evaluation of Literacy Programmes

Evaluation of literacy programmes has been a fairly recent phenomenon. The first major evaluation study was that of Unesco's Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWIP). But while literature on evaluation of literacy and development programmes has multiplied during the last two decades, evaluation efforts, by and large, have remained sporadic, unsystematic, and have not always had functional utility.

One of the main reasons for undertaking evaluation of literacy programmes is to obtain information that will improve the functioning of the on-going programme. Evaluation, by itself, is of little importance unless the information it produces is used in decision-making. Evaluation has been defined as a process that involves the collection and use of information to make decisions about educational programmes. Why then is it that relatively little attention tends to be given to evaluation of literacy programmes?

One of the reasons for lack of adequate evaluation of literacy programmes may lie in the threat of evaluation.

Traditionally, evaluation has been thought of as a means for finding out whether a programme 'worked'. The procedure that has been generally followed is that of setting up goals and objectives of the programme. Then a baseline survey is undertaken in order to determine the situation before the start of the programme. Finally, at the end of the programme operation, a similar post-test or survey is carried out to see if there has been any change and whether the goals and the objectives of the programme have been met. This type of end-of-the-activity evaluation — generally carried out by an external agency or group of professionals — is often perceived as a mere fault-finding exercise and as such, evaluation is not accorded high priority by those who are involved in the task of implementing the programme.

As a result, a great deal of evaluation research is either unutilized or under-utilized. Some of the reasons are:

1. Lack of Participation of the Project Staff in the Evaluation Process
   The involvement of the project staff in the planning and carrying out of an evaluation study, to a great extent, would determine whether or not the evaluation findings and recommendations would be utilized. Often, the project staff members are not consulted in the planning of the evaluation studies because their involvement by most evaluators is considered to be time-consuming and not very useful.

2. Conflicting interests of Project Staff and Evaluator
   The lack of effective feedback of evaluation findings into programme operation is characteristic of most evaluation studies. The project implementing staff feel they cannot wait for the reports of the evaluation studies because they want quick evaluation results to solve their day-to-day problems. On the other hand, for those engaged in 'scientific' evaluation, the concern is more with accuracy and reliability of data. They feel a greater need to turn out scholarly, publishable reports rather than to be responsive to the needs of the programme implementors.

3. Irrelevant Evaluation Results in Relation to Programme Needs
   Oftentimes evaluation results are not related to the problems and needs of the programme. This is largely because there is little dialogue between the evaluators and users of evaluation results. In the name of 'objectivity', the evaluators tend to become insensitive to field realities. Evaluation is responsive to the needs of the evaluators, not to those of the practitioner.
4. Academic Nature of Evaluation Reports

Evaluation reports are generally not read by the administrators and policy makers because of the manner in which they are written. They are often long and complex and contain statistics and technical jargon that are quite alien to the administrators. Consequently, administrators are unable to decide whether or not to use the evaluation results as basis for planning, implementation or redirection of the programme.

5. Abuse of Evaluation Information

Evaluation produces information and it is possible that this information is used to service the selfish ends of various interests and groups. This 'politics' of evaluation can appear at various levels of decision-making. At one level, decisions may be made for or against the continuation, expansion or modification of a programme. At another level, it may be used for reprimanding, even victimizing those who are involved in programme operation. Hence, there is a tendency towards maintaining a status-quo. When individuals and organisations are presented with negative results, they react by rejecting the results because their prestige, ideology and sometimes, even their resources, are threatened.

6. Over-reliance of Evaluation Methodologies on Quantitative Methods

Evaluation of the impact of literacy and development programmes has tended to rely too heavily on quantitative research methods. Most, if not all, of the different approaches and methods that have been used have been highly technical and mechanistic and have focussed on the measurement of quantifiable socio-economic results. Consequently, in order to maintain methodological rigour, the evaluation studies have over-simplified social reality to a point where there is lesser understanding about the complexities of human behaviour.
Recent Trends in Evaluation of Literacy Programmes

There has been a growing awareness in recent years that the orientation of literacy evaluation towards measurement of programme outcome only should change towards assessment of inputs and improvement of ongoing processes. While it has been recognised that summative and comprehensive type of evaluation is necessary at the end of any literacy programme, the need for an in-built system of evaluation has been clearly felt. It has been generally accepted that evaluation must help in identifying barriers and bottlenecks that come up from time to time during programme implementation in order to apply corrective measures for continual improvement of the programme. In other words, a distinction is now clearly made between ‘formative’ and ‘summative’ evaluation. But in order to understand these concepts, it is essential to note the recent developments in the field of educational evaluation and the impact these developments have had on evaluation of literacy programmes.

Some of the American scholars, notably Michael Seriven (1973) and Danial Stufflebeam (1971), deserve special mention. This is also necessary in order to understand the context from which a growing interest in more participatory forms of evaluation has emerged.

Seriven is best known for his advocacy of ‘goal-free’ evaluation. The thrust behind goal-free evaluation is the view that an evaluator needs to study a programme’s effects, intended or unintended, and that concern with just stated objectives of the programme would be too restrictive. Servien’s point is that we must judge a programme by the impact it has in practice, not what may have been hoped for, and a focus on merely the stated objectives could act as blinkers to what is actually happening.

Stufflebeam’s major contribution has been the development of his well known Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) model of evaluation. In linking evaluation with decision-making, he has re-defined evaluation as a system for providing information for judging decision alternatives. Of relevance to his model is his analysis of four types of decisions: planning decisions to determine objectives; structuring decisions to design alternative input confirmations and processes; implementing decisions to put into practice and refine those processes; and recycling decision to judge and improve the state of project operations. (Klees, Esmanhoto and Werthorn, 1986).

In literacy evaluation, Bhola’s (1979) 3-S model (situation specific strategy) shows the influence of such a systems approach to evaluation. According to Bhola, the 3-S model suggests how the four parameters of the “theory of general systems (input, process, output and context) can be used to conduct evaluation in a variety of social and ideological contexts by drawing upon a variety of methodologies. These methodologies and techniques, however, will vary according to the particular situation in which evaluation is undertaken: they will have to be situation specific”.

In the systems model developed by Dave (1980), the mechanisms of appraisal, feedback, diagnosis and remedial action are built in through all the stages of a project or programme including pre-planning, planning, implementation and assimilation stages. In this model, evaluation does not figure at the end of a project but cuts across all phases of a project cycle. According to Dave, a built-in evaluation system should have wider scope than just outcome evaluation and should include the following dimensions:

1. Appraisal of the Environmental Setting

1.1 Diagnostic analysis of historical and current situation in the socio-economic, political, educational and other domains.

1.2 Assessment of needs and priorities.
2. Evaluation of Inputs
2.1 Material inputs.
2.2 Non-material inputs.

3. Evaluation of Processes
3.1 Management processes.
3.2 Pedagogical processes.

4. Evaluation of Immediate Outcomes
4.1 Intermediary outcomes.
4.2 Learning outcomes.

5. Appraisal of Long-range Effects
5.1 On the educational domain.
5.2 On socio-economic and other domains of development.

When evaluation is viewed as a built-in system, the concept of ‘formative’ evaluation assumes significance. Various appraisal or assessment studies can be undertaken before the initiation of a programme. Specific pre-planning strategies such as needs assessment can help to determine the needs and interests of the learners for whom the programme is intended. A pilot-testing of a curriculum component or field testing of educational materials can be carried out before the materials are reproduced for general use. Similarly, a systematic evaluation of material inputs (of men, materials, finances) and non-material inputs (such as political will, bureaucratic commitment, etc.) and of management processes (such as administrative structures, mechanisms for obtaining coordination, etc.) and pedagogical processes (relating to suitability of teaching/learning materials, adequacy of training programmes, etc.) can be carried out as part of formative evaluation.

From the early sixties to mid and even late seventies, the issues and approaches presented above tended to predominate in evaluation practice. In the last ten years or so, however, there has been a shift and there is increasingly "an emphasis on qualitative methods, participation of non-experts in the evaluation processes and possibility of obtaining multiple and often conflicting assessments of project impact" (Klees, Esmahoto and Werthern, 1986). In line with this development, there has been a growing realization of the importance of internal evaluation rather than merely external evaluation. It has now been recognized that evaluation that is conducted by ‘insiders’ is more likely to be utilized than if it were done by outsiders to the programme. In most programmes, however, there is actually a need for both types of evaluation. The advantage of internal evaluation is that it improves the possibility that findings of the external evaluation will be more positive than if the project had been run from beginning to end with no data to help in making the needed changes. Rather than using trained, sophisticated evaluators to undertake evaluative studies, the emphasis is now on the project staff itself to undertake evaluation on a continuing basis. Evaluation is thus increasingly seen as a valuable internal process for assisting project staff to make more effective decisions while the project is actually going on. If information on various aspects of the programme is received on a regular basis by the project staff, necessary timely changes can be brought about to improve the functioning of the programme. In a literacy programme, these internal or ‘feedback’ procedures would help to answer questions that deal with the basic health of the programme. Are the materials relevant to the needs and interests of the learners? What has been the impact of the literacy programme on the adult learners? These and many such questions that are relevant to the functioning of a programme can be asked. The nature of the questions, however, would depend upon what the project staff decides is the most critical component of the programme.
Kinsey (1981) has described some criteria that need to be considered in adapting evaluation methods for use by practitioners. According to him, the evaluation methods would need to take into consideration limited skills, time and cost demands. The technical skills required to carry on evaluation would have to be within the range of existing or easily trainable skills of average field personnel. The amount of time required to use the methods would have to be limited since field staff is generally overburdened with a large number of programme responsibilities. And since most programmes run on small budgets, the method would have to have minimum financial requirements. Kinsey also advocates evaluation approaches that are as unobtrusive as possible in order to minimize programme disruption and client resistance. In order to ensure that evaluation produces locally usable results, the methods would need to have relatively high prospects of utility so as to gain acceptance. This would imply that evaluation would need to contribute to planning or problem-solving needs, arising before the initiation of a programme activity or during its implementation. Further, the ‘undeveloped’ nature of many literacy programmes would virtually mandate evaluation approaches that allow for non-quantifiable indicators and goal-free dimensions. Kinsey argues that since the objectives of most literacy programmes are often unclear or are in a state of flux, “the usual process of clarifying objectives, translating them into behavioral outcomes and developing quantifiable indicators by which to measure them, may require more skills, time and organisational stability than are available in the programme” (Kinsey, 1981).

A growing disenchantment with quantitative methods has unquestionably led to a resurgence of interest in qualitative methods. Going back to educational evaluation, it is Parlett and Hamilton who criticized what they called the “agricultural-botany” paradigm in traditional evaluation. According to them, within this paradigm, “students—rather like plant crops—are given pre-tests (the seedlings are weighed or measured) and then submitted to different experiences (treatment conditions). Subsequently, after a period of time, their attainment (growth or yield) is measured to indicate the relative efficiency of the methods (fertilizers) used. Studies of this kind are designed to yield data of a particular type i.e. objective numerical data that permit statistical analysis” (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972). Considering the shortcomings of this paradigm, they proposed an alternate model described as “illuminative evaluation”. According to them, “illuminative evaluation takes into account the wider contexts in which educational programmes function. Its primary function is with description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction” (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972). Essentially, what they are proposing is that the ‘learning milieu’ is so complex and diverse that it is not adequate to deal with it on the basis of prior designed evaluation tools that provide quantitative data. What is essential is for the evaluators to “enter the learning milieu, experience it, and study it through a process of progressive focussing in which human observers explore, judge, inquire further, and interpret, illuminating the often conflicting perspectives of the various participants involved” (Kees et al, 1986). Although survey questionnaires would be useful in some stages of this approach, they advocate more attention to methods of participant observation, open-ended interviewing and analysis of documents.

Robert Stake developed a model of evaluation which he labeled responsive evaluation in that it was directed toward responding to the different “stakeholding audiences”. Stake argued “an educational evaluation is responsive evaluation if it orients more directly to programme activities than programme intents; responds to audience requirement for information; and if the different value perspectives present are referred to in reporting the success and failure of the programme” (Stake, 1975). According to Stake’s approach to evaluation, a responsive (evaluation) design is never fully specified but is continuously evolving and the methods used for data collection are qualitative rather than quantitative.

Even in evaluation of literacy and development programmes, there has been an increasing realization of the importance of qualitative methodology and of its appropriateness as a research methodology. This is not to suggest, however, that there is a rejection by the researchers and evaluators of quantitative methodologies. Rather, what is argued for is the need to recognize the complementarity of the qualitative and quantitative approaches so as to achieve a more balanced picture. Unesco’s Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) was a good case of a highly
technical and mechanistic approach to evaluation that focusses on the measurement of quantifiable socio-economic results. In the EWLP, the socio-economic impact of literacy was evaluated by devising a long list of indicators for testing and measuring changes in the neo-literates’ behaviour. The changes were measured with the help of interview schedules and observation checklists and the information obtained with these instruments was statistically analysed. The various indicators of change were grouped under three main behavioural categories: insertion into the milieu, mastery of the milieu, and transformation of the milieu. The heading ‘insertion into the milieu’ consisted of indicators designed to measure changes in areas such as interest in further education, management of personal finances, exposure to mass media, seeking out of technical advice, use of the three R’s and participation in formal organizations. Under ‘mastery of the milieu’, the indicators of change were related to behaviour at work, knowledge of modern technical practices, and adoption of modern practices. The indicators of change in the third behavioural category of ‘transformation of the milieu’ were concerned with the means of production, the volume of production, cash income, income in kind, consumption of durable goods.

In the critical assessment of the EWLP (1976) it was acknowledged that “single-minded preoccupation with even more sophisticated quantification at least sometimes blinded EWLP evaluators to simple truths that were in plain view. On occasion, it thus led them into dead-end logic”. The Unesco assessment report concludes its discussion on the evaluation methods used in the EWLP projects by admitting that the kind of evaluation design that was used “could only reveal the short-term and most mechanistic socio-economic effects of the world programme”. It also concludes with a recommendation that “in future a better balance between quantitative and qualitative evaluation of literacy action should be struck”.

Qualitative methods of investigation have been concerned more with the inner aspects of human behaviour. Filstead (1972) defines qualitative methodology as”..... those research strategies, such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, total participation in the activity being investigated, field work etc, which allow the researcher to obtain first-hand knowledge about the empirical social world in question”. Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to “get close to the data, thereby developing the analytical, conceptual and categorical components of explanation from the data itself - rather than from the pre-conceived, rigidly structured and highly quantified techniques that pigeon-hole the empirical social world into the operational definitions that the researcher has constructed” (Filstead, 1972).

One of the criticisms leveled against the evaluation of EWLP has been the emphasis put on measuring the quantitative changes in areas of change predetermined and selected by the evaluators, rather than by those for whom the programme was intended. The specific criticism has been that the invisible, the innermost, the more personal and qualitative effects of literacy on people were largely ignored. It has been said that no attempt was made to look at the more personal and qualitative changes in the lives of the neo-literates - to their thinking, their feelings, their perception about themselves and their environment. In the light of the more liberating, humanistic and man-centred goals of literacy, and in view of the fact that the process of adult literacy is an intensely emotional experience, Kassam (1977) believes that by far the most significant and profound impact of literacy on the people can be found in the personal and qualitative realm of people’s own thinking, their own feelings, their own vision and their own perceptions about the changes that may have occurred in themselves and in their situation. He advocates an anthropocentric approach to literacy evaluation which involves the interpretation of reality exclusively in terms of human values and human experiences. “The impact of literacy is portrayed exclusively in terms of the participants’ own perception and interpretations of the literacy process as freely discussed by themselves, rather than through the use of sets of selective criteria, assumptions and prefabricated research instruments of the educators and evaluators. The anthropocentric approach is qualitative and humanistic and epistemologically it helps to give a more accurate reflection of social reality”. Kassam is of the view that a sensitive manner in which to capture the impact of the literacy process would be to let the participants evaluate themselves by having dialogue with them on an individual basis.
In the anthropocentric or ‘man-centred’ approach to literacy evaluation, Kassam has drawn his inspiration from Paulo Freire. Freire on his part has advocated a participatory approach to evaluation that ensures that the people whose lives are being studied become active participants rather than remain mere objects in the evaluation process. Freire’s concerns with the oppressed people and the ‘wretched of the earth’, who are submerged in a ‘culture of silence’, led him to propound a revolutionary methodology of the educational process in general and the adult literacy process in particular. According to him, the purpose of all education programmes, including the literacy process, should be to liberate the people through a process of ‘dialogue’ and ‘conscientization’ which can help the adults to name the world and acquire a critical awareness of their oppressive environment, which can then lead them to take the necessary action to transform it. For him, the evaluation process, like the educational process, should liberate the human potential through a process of dialogue. In a address to the Institute of Adult Education, University of Dar-es-Salaam in July 1972, he presented the following steps in such an approach to evaluation:

1. The evaluation team should acquaint itself with all previous research and evaluation - no matter what methods were used in that research and evaluation.

2. The team should delimit the area of action geographically - even though, culturally speaking, there are no frontiers.

3. The team should identify official and popular institutions in the area selected and go and talk to the leaders within those institutions.

4. The evaluation team should tell these leaders, in all honesty, that they have come to discuss the possibility of all people in that community holding discussions and working together.

5. If the leaders agree, the evaluation team should hold meetings not only with the leaders of various institutions but also with people who are involved in some way with those institutions.

6. The evaluation team should discuss with the community arrangements for meetings wherein groups of say, thirty people, could come together on a daily or weekly basis for discussions. Such meetings might involve almost all the inhabitants of a community and last for several weeks. The important thing would be to obtain a perception of the whole community.

7. Sociologists, psychologists, educators and linguists should at this stage, join the evaluation team and visit each group. Records of discussions should be made at each meeting. People should be urged to speak if they are silent, but otherwise the role of the evaluation team should be no more than advisory. One of the members of the community should chair such meetings.

8. Justice, education, government, industry and many other topics may be discussed - but all in terms of the people and in the context of concrete realities.

9. When the smaller groups think they have exhausted the topics for discussion, each one should put its findings on paper and then they should meet in a general session. The reporters at such sessions should be the people themselves, not the specialists on the teams. The workers should become intellectuals. There should be collective discussion of each group report.

10. The evaluation team should now make a critical study of the people's discourse. The study should be interdisciplinary.
Evaluation System Design
Some Considerations

Before designing an evaluation system it is necessary to give adequate attention to some important considerations. These are spelled out below:

Political Implications of Evaluation

The role of evaluation has to be understood in the total socio-political context of any country. Any literacy programme would evolve from national policies and plans which in turn would emerge from the ideology of the nation. The evaluators would need to be wary lest he/she should adopt a set of evaluation techniques that are derived from conflicting political orientations. In some countries it is possible that evaluation methodologies that are identified with behaviourism, bureaucratization and control are more acceptable than those that derive from more humanistic considerations. While it may not be necessary to regard these methodologies as being diametrically opposed to each other, the evaluator would need to understand the ideological climate of the country so that the choice of evaluation methods are consistent with the country’s political orientation.

But just as the political ideology of a country would condition the evaluation methodologies, an evaluator’s own political leanings or personal biases would affect the choice of the methodology used by him/her. For evaluation is not a neutral activity. It has to be recognised that it is not possible to undertake evaluation that is not contaminated by personal and political sympathies. The question is not whether we should take sides, since that is inevitable, but rather whose side we should take. Moreover, pretending that there is no decision to be made is in itself a choice. As Freire has put it, “refusal to take sides in the conflict of the powerful with the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral”. Once it is accepted that the evaluator can never avoid taking sides, the next question that can be asked is whether taking sides means that some distortion is introduced into the evaluation work that is so great as to make it useless. As evaluators it is important to make clear the limits of what has been studied, marking the boundaries within which the findings can be accepted. Thus, for example, if an evaluation study has been undertaken from the perspective of the poor illiterate adult rather than the perspective of the planner, administrator or policy maker, this value orientation of the evaluators needs to be made explicit. In other words, a clear articulation and understanding of one’s political sympathies or biases is necessary. Or else it is possible that while the evaluator proclaims commitments to humanism, he/she may in fact be using bureaucratic even manipulative techniques of evaluation. There is yet another political dimension to allocate or cut back resources, cover up mistakes, legitimize decisions taken, build reputations etc. Politics can also play a significant role at the end of evaluation and reporting of the results has to be done with full awareness of the fact that a literacy programme would have some people who would advocate its implementation at all costs and those who are convinced that it would never work. Any evaluation results would therefore be criticized by at least one of the two groups. Political forces could act to suppress or modify evaluation results to protect the vested interest groups and bases of power. What this implies is that any evaluation study would need to be conducted with full cognizance of these obstacles and difficulties. These aspects could place the potential evaluation in an invidious as well as in an ineffectual position.

Clarification of Evaluation Approaches

Various evaluation approaches have been developed and the choice of these approaches would be conditioned by such questions as evaluation ‘for whom’, evaluation ‘of what’, and ‘for what purpose’.
If the purpose of evaluation is to provide information services to the community about the effectiveness or impact of the literacy programme, the role of the evaluator would be that of a broker in exchange of information between differing groups. His/her techniques of data gathering and presentation would be such as to be accessible to non-specialist groups. The criterion of success would be range of audiences served. On the other hand, if evaluation is intended for those government agencies which have major control over allocation of resources, the evaluator would have to offer information which would help them to accomplish their policy objectives. The key concepts for the evaluators would be ‘service’, ‘utility’, ‘efficiency’. Here, the effectiveness of the literacy programme would be assessed by ascertaining whether or not it reached required standards on pre-specified criteria. For this purpose, there would be a greater reliance on scientific and quantitative approaches to evaluation that yield ‘objective’ numerical data and permit statistical analysis. On the other hand, Seriven’s ‘goal-free’ evaluation and Parlett and Hamilton’s evaluation as ‘illumination’ approach reject evaluation by objectives and are intended to serve not only sponsors and administrators but also field worker and adult learners.

Freire’s participatory approach to evaluation abolishes the distinction between evaluation and education, considering evaluation to be part of social praxis. An evaluator could select any one or a mix of the approaches but in any case, a clarification of these approaches that would be consistent with the social and ideological context of the evaluation would be necessary.

Understanding Programme Parameters

In designing an evaluation study, it would be necessary to clearly understand the content, the aims and the objectives of the literacy programme. It is possible that the purpose of the literacy programme may be stated in such simplistic terms as to teach the adult to read and write. An evaluation study that is guided only by this explicit objective would be too limited in its scope. On the other hand, it is possible that only broad and vague objectives have been defined for the literacy programme. The evaluator would then need to operationally define the terms stated in the objectives. In addition, it would be necessary to assess outcomes which are unintended and unanticipated. A literacy programme is a complex educational undertaking and its outcomes are numerous and not easy to define. This means that the evaluator would have to bear in mind the need for constant revision of objectives, in as much as the initial need for defining them. Since a literacy programme is generally conceived as part of the overall development strategy, the need for understanding the programme parameters would be even greater.

Defining the Evaluation System

In order to design a ‘pragmatic and practical’ evaluation system, an evaluation would need to clearly spell out answers to questions such as why is the evaluation being conducted, and who is it for.

Why Evaluation?

There are two kinds of evaluations. One is to improve a programme and the other is to determine its effectiveness. Improvement and effectiveness evaluation can be distinguished from each other by the manner in which the information is used rather than by the kinds of information collected, or the stage at which it is gathered.

The purpose of an improvement evaluation - or formative evaluation or current status analysis - is to determine how a literacy programme can be further upgraded and modified. This type of evaluation is typically requested by those who are implementing the programme. Some of the questions that it can help answer are:

- Are the participants in the programme the same as the ones for whom the programme was intended?
- Are the materials appropriate to the needs of the learners?
- Have adequate training facilities been provided at all levels?
— Have suitable field functionaries been selected for implementing the programme?

Answers to questions such as these would help in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and indicate areas in which changes or modifications would be necessary. Other questions frequently asked in an improvement evaluation would be:

- By the end of the third month of the programme, are the learners showing evidence of critical analysis?
- Are the learners convinced of the need to become literate?

The purpose of the effectiveness evaluation, on the other hand, is to ascertain the programme’s overall effectiveness and is generally requested by policy makers, planners, implementors or even by the community of learners. It helps in ascertaining the impact of the literacy programme primarily on the learners as also on the local community. Some of the questions asked are:

- How many adults have become literate, reading and writing at the level of literacy norms laid down by the programme?
- In what manner has the literacy programme brought about overall development of those who participated in the programme?

Another type of effectiveness evaluation examines the costs involved and determines the cost effectiveness of the programme. In doing this, it also indicates the direct and indirect benefits of the programme.

Specification of why evaluation is being undertaken would enable the evaluation to focus on the crucial areas for which evaluation information would be necessary.

**Evaluation for Whom?**

The crucial questions to be asked here are: To whose needs and interests is the evaluator responding? Who owns the data (researcher, subject, sponsor)? Who has access to the data (who is excluded or left out)? Who is going to use the evaluation? Who is the evaluation for?

There are three distinct constituencies for whom evaluation can be undertaken. These are:

(i) Programme participants and the local community.

(ii) Programme sponsors/policy makers, planners, administrators and field functionaries.

(iii) Academic research community.

If the purpose of evaluation is primarily to contribute to decision-making, each group or constituency would look to the evaluation report for help in making different decisions. Thus, the programme participants would be anxious to correct deficiencies, make improvements and establish future priorities. The programme sponsors and policy makers would be interested in knowing whether the resources were adequate or needed to be augmented as also the effectiveness of the programme. The third constituency as outsiders to the programme, would be interested in knowing whether the programme worked. An understanding of the audience for whom the evaluation is intended would enable an evaluator to make crucial decisions regarding evaluation design.

**Designing the Evaluation System**

In designing an evaluation system, the evaluator has to decide what aspects of the programme have to be evaluated and the manner in which data will be obtained.

**(i) Defining Objectives for Evaluation**

Identification of broad and specific objectives would determine the parameters of the evaluation study. The
objectives would need to be stated in clear, specific terms to avoid repetition and confusion. In identifying the objectives, the following factors could be taken into consideration:

— time within which the study has to be completed;
— resource availability in terms of finance, facilities and functionaries for conducting the study;
— manner in which the objectives would help in improving the programme.

(ii) Identifying Areas of Evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation study would help in identifying the areas of the programme that need to be studied. For example, if the purpose of the evaluation is to assess the impact of the literacy programme, then clearly the acquisition of literacy skills by the learners would be one of the parameters on which information would be needed. Or if the purpose is to assess the adequacy of the technical resource support for the programme, then attention would have to be paid to the teaching/learning materials that are in use and to the training programmes that are designed for the functionaries. In other words, a clarification of those aspects, those dimensions of the programme that need to be paid attention to, is necessary.

(iii) Identifying Source of Evaluation Information

Once the areas of evaluation, as well as the criteria, are worked out, it is essential to identify the sources from which evaluation information can be collected. Sources of data can be secondary such as historical and archival records and documents, census reports, previous evaluation studies, etc. Written records would include log books, diaries and registers that are maintained by the field functionaries. These documents are among the most useful, easily obtainable and least expensive sources of information for an evaluation of a literacy programme. Primary sources of information would include members of the community, field staff, senior members of the organisation, policy makers, planners etc.

Other individuals or groups who may be affected by the programme or its evaluation would be the families of programme participants, local level advisory committees, etc. These individuals and groups could provide valuable information regarding the effectiveness of the programme in the overall development context.

(iv) Selecting Appropriate Evaluation Techniques or Methods

This stage of evaluation process deals with collection of data on those aspects that are previously identified. Methods of data collection can be varied: there could be open ended interviews, questionnaires, structured interviews, group discussions, field observations, study of records, etc. Some of these methods for collecting evaluation data are elucidated:

(a) Analysis of documents, diaries, logbooks - collection and analysis of available documents would be useful at the onset of the evaluation study. Other useful sources of information would be the log books, diaries, workbooks, that are maintained by the field staff and the learners.

(b) Use of questionnaires - questionnaires can be used to collect information of factual nature as well as to collect data which summarizes opinions and attitudes of individuals. One myth that commonly exists about questionnaires is that a large sample size is required if any sort of accurate estimate is to be made. This is not so, for with proper sampling techniques, a comparatively small sample can be effectively chosen.

(c) Use of tests for ascertaining literacy attainment - information regarding the basic competencies acquired by the learner before he/she finishes from a particular level of literacy programme can be attained by means of a test. In most literacy programmes, these basic competencies are not spelt out and as such it is necessary that the levels
of literacy and numeracy skills are defined first. Since formal paper-pencil literacy tests often become a threat to the learners, certain informal ways of testing through literacy games, literacy puzzles, simulation exercises, peer evaluation and the like, can be suitably tried.

(d) Field observations - field visits would be concerned both with the physical and sociological aspects and with the community of learners, their awareness, their motivation, their interest. In making observations, evaluators could use either a structured or an unstructured approach. The former would involve the identification of main components, and would have a check-list of items to be observed. The latter approach would be less directed in that the observer would merely note things of greater interest and form an opinion of the basis of such observation.

(e) Open-ended interviews, group discussions - in depth interviews either individually or in groups would provide useful qualitative information. Through such discussions it would be possible to elicit information that normally is not provided by a questionnaire. New insights could be provided through such discussions and new avenues could open up to provide future directions for the programmes.

(f) Use of folk media - in addition to these methods, newer methods of evaluation can also be evolved. Folk media, songs, role plays, art and drawings etc., can also be effectively use for evaluation purposes.
Participatory Evaluation
New Developments

In more recent years, participatory approaches to evaluation have tended to gain wider acceptability and legitimacy in the field of adult education. Some of these programmes have concerned themselves with empowering the poorest groups in the population both in terms of their cultural as well as their political developments. Essentially popular education programmes, they are intended for those groups that have the least possibilities of participating meaningfully in mainstream society, be these the rural poor or the city’s, the wage earning or the self or unemployed proletariat. Generally speaking, many of these programmes, also called cultural action programmes, rely on the notion that a group with some outside assistance, generates knowledge through its own efforts and decides courses of action based on such knowledge. This requires that the participants raise their everyday experiences to a problem condition and explore and try out means for dealing with the problem. What is important in this educational endeavor is the fact that the problem has been voiced and that solution has been tried out by the people concerned.

By their very nature, evaluation of such adult education programmes preclude the application of accepted forms of programme evaluation and require instead, more participatory approaches. The central characteristic of Participatory Evaluation is that people who are involved in the programme, both as implementors and as beneficiaries, begin to participate in and take charge of the evaluation efforts. The essential characteristics of Participatory Evaluation have been defined thus “the control over the process of evaluation remains in the hands of those who are developing and implementing and benefiting from the programmes. Thus, the evaluation serves the interest of furthering the benefits and improving the programmes and organizations involved in development at the base, and not those who are intending to control it from the top. In a way, Participatory Evaluation is an attempt at redefining and reaffirming development as a “bottom up”, “people centred”, “people controlled” process and not a technocratic, top-down intervention. It is this thrust that provides the distinctive meaning to Participatory Evaluation Methodology”.

In an International Forum on Participatory Evaluation held in March 1988, some of the key issues in Participatory Evaluation were elaborated (Report of International Forum on Participatory Evaluation, 1988). Some of the salient key issues are reiterated here:

1. Participatory evaluation can not and does not operate in a political vacuum and hence the larger socio-political frame work has to be considered to ensure that cooptation does not take place.

2. The mission and purpose of participatory evaluation is that of empowering the poor and the oppressed masses. This overall mission needs to be explicitly understood so that the design and conduct of an evaluation does not degenerate into a mere technical exercise.

3. Participatory evaluation is essentially a process of learning—an educational process that promotes reflection and critical analysis by the powerless and the oppressed of their own reality and circumstances. According to Vio Grossi, participatory evaluation becomes an exercise in the transformation from the habitus to the corpus. The meaning of ‘habitus’ is to produce and reproduce the existing cultural order as represented in ideas, attitudes and communication and to continue things as they are and to do them better. ‘Corpus’ implies transforming the habitus, not accepting it as it is but bringing about a qualitative shift, including changing meaning of words. This would mean questioning and challenging the existing reality.
(4) Since the concern of participatory evaluation is to empower the powerless such that they can develop their capacities to transform their reality, participatory evaluation tends to be partisan and to take sides. While traditional evaluation denies and negates the subjectivity of the participants, participatory evaluation tends to represent the standpoint of the poor and the oppressed. This implies that subjectivity is an essential ingredient in participatory evaluation.

(5) Participation is the central issue in participatory evaluation. It builds on the notions of centrality of the people in the process of analysis and reflection. While it is important to recognize that any evaluation exercise encompasses a variety of constituencies or stakeholders who have interest in the outcome of that exercise, it becomes incumbent in the participatory evaluation exercise to maintain the centrality of the oppressed groups so that their view point and their interests receive over-riding attention. If this does not happen, there is every possibility that the participatory evaluation exercise might get ‘hijacked’.

(6) There are various factors that promote or hinder genuine participation; for example, the existing level of literacy among the participants can influence their participation in the evaluation process. This is particularly so if the evaluation used data collection methods like surveys and questionnaires. On the other hand, if other modes such as role plays, songs, drama are used, then participation of those with lower levels of literacy can be ensured. Even the use of language in terms of words and phrases can be alienating and as such needs to be paid attention to availability of adequate and sufficient time is a crucial factor in generating and sustaining participation. In the case of women particularly, the aforementioned arguments hold true. For women, among whom illiteracy is a major problem, need the space and the time to facilitate reflection and discussions and a non-threatening and supportive environment.

(7) Participatory evaluation requires facilitation of one kind or another. Facilitation is necessary for various purposes such as to create an environment of sharing and reflection, to encourage participation and expression of people’s experience, knowledge, viewpoints, etc. Several facilitation skills need to be acquired, for expertise in participatory evaluation is essentially an expertise in facilitation skills.

In conclusion, knowledge is the core of the issue in participatory evaluation. With increasing sophistication, production of knowledge has become a specialized profession of traditional evaluation and only those trained in that profession have tended to engage in production of knowledge. Consequently, oppressed groups are not considered either knowledgeable or capable of knowing so that decisions affecting their lives are based on expert knowledge which professionals generate. If the purpose of knowledge is redefined as power to the poor, then this would imply democratization of knowledge generation and reduction in monopolistic control over the process of knowledge production. This would also imply a shift in the power relationship in favour of the oppressed majority groups.

A question can be asked whether in the praxis of participatory evaluation there can ever be fixed deadlines, formal evaluation exercises and the like, or where such an evaluation would necessarily be less rigorous and a more adaptive process. One of the main difference between participatory evaluation and the classical methods of social research would be the open-ended, constant and indefinite search for knowledge that the former methodology would imply. Successive work cycles would be determined in participatory evaluation only by the sense of commitment of the evaluation to people’s organisation, movements and actions and would depend upon the goals achieved. Participatory evaluation engagements would generally be of a long term nature, lasting as long as those taking part in them desire to do so, even lasting as long as people persist in their legitimate struggle to alter the existing realities.