Block 3 Some Current Issues and Applications

Unit 9 Evaluation of education and training
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Unit 9  Evaluation of education and training

Prepared for the Course Team by Jenny Lewis, with contributions from Sylvia Brown and Chris Mabey

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Aims

To address methodological and management issues related to the evaluation of education, training and development provision, where the perspectives and interests of key stakeholders may differ significantly.

Objectives

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Distinguish between several different approaches to evaluation, in order to choose an appropriate approach to improve the effectiveness of education, training or development in a given context.
- Show critical awareness of the derivation and some current uses of performance indicators, league tables and evaluation data in the context of further and higher education and training.
- Apply systems concepts to an analysis of current management education, training and development provision, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses revealed.
- Participate in current debates about the desirable future shape of management education and development both in and outside the UK from the points of view of key stakeholders.
- Contribute to the ongoing evaluation of B889.
1 Introduction

This unit uses the topics of education, training and development to focus on the evaluation part of the course title. So far in Block 3, the emphasis has been, at least implicitly, on performance measurement and performance indicators. The difficulties of devising and implementing performance measurement for efficiency in complex situations were paramount in Unit 8. Unit 7 on quality covered effectiveness as well as efficiency but in this unit there will be a broadening of emphasis to encompass considerations of effectiveness more explicitly. This will be achieved by covering several discrete topics. We start by trying to define evaluation, then look at various initiatives in the higher education field, highlighting difficulties with objectives and the influences of multiple stakeholders. Next, the particular case of management education and training is considered. Here the problems of multiple stakeholders and conflicting objectives are clearly illustrated, leading to confusion when one system attempts to produce several incompatible outcomes. The evaluation of management training – a problem for many middle and senior managers – is discussed using real case study examples. Section 5 looks at the evaluation of management development. Finally, after discussing models of evaluation, we invite you to evaluate your own educational development, including this course.

What do you think of when you hear the word ‘evaluation’? We suspect your answer will vary according to whether you are an auditor, a planner, a scientist or an educator. The Concise Oxford Dictionary is of little help. It states:

To ascertain amount of, to find numerical expression for, appraise, assess.

But if you as a manager are asked to evaluate a project, a product or a service, you will usually want to know more than how big it is or how much it will cost. You will want to know how useful and successful it is or will be – questions of value rather than of pure cost. You may well not be looking for the cheapest project, but for the most effective in fulfilling your organizational objectives. In terms of education, training and development we will address questions such as how effective is the UK’s higher education system? How effective is our organization’s induction course for graduate trainees? How effective is the tutorial support on B889? How effective is it for an employer to sponsor a student on the Open University MBA programme? Sadly, in most cases the options evaluated will include that of deciding not to train or educate people.
2 Higher education: a case of multiple objectives

Next, please read the edited article 'Measuring university performance: never mind the quality, never mind the width?' by Christopher Pollitt in the Reader. Pollitt raises many worthwhile questions for evaluators, whilst being honest in making clear his own biases as an educator who is part of the current UK system.

Commentary

The article contains various acronyms. The CVCP is the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. The UGC was the University Grants Committee, which was superseded by the Universities Funding Council and subsequently by separate Higher Education Funding Councils for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland following a major reorganization of the British higher education system in 1992. The DES was the UK government's Department of Education and Science (now the Department for Education). FTE means full time equivalent.

The question of multiple stakeholders is raised early in the article using a simple fivefold taxonomy, which you may find useful later on for activities in this unit. However, you should note that in higher education institutions many academics are also managers, so their loyalties are potentially split between categories (ii) and (iii). Some of you may be professionals such as accountants, scientists or doctors who are struggling with similar role conflict as managers in industry or the public sector.

One of the most important points for us in studying performance measurement and evaluation is raised under the section on 'Indicators and objectives: a philosophical preamble' in the sentence 'One major problem with the way in which the model has been applied in the UK is that the attempt to set up indicators has run well ahead of the specification of objectives'.

By now you will recognize that this is a classic fault for any systems design. Pollitt continues to attempt a definition of the objectives of higher education (defined as university level, undergraduate and higher degrees). He then concentrates on the objective that he feels is most neglected, that of consumption benefits. If you have time, you may like to discuss with your fellow students Pollitt's argument that higher education can 'provide a profound but subtle benefit to society as a whole'. If you do not have the time, does it tell you anything about the argument or the nature of society? If you are based outside the UK you may like to reflect on whether this argument would be of interest in your country.

Regarding mission statements, note that The Open University and the Open Business School do indeed have their own mission statements. A current version of one of them is included in Section 6 for you to use if needed in your own evaluations.

As the section 'The input-output relationship' in the Reader article points out, the numerous performance indicators proposed neglect almost entirely the concept of the value added during a university education. Pollitt likens this issue to the case-mix debate that you met in Unit 8 on health care. In the next section of this
unit we take this discussion further, to look at whether different types of student, as inputs, affect the educational results obtained.

You may find Pollitt’s article a useful source of ideas for the activities on evaluating your own learning in Section 6.

You may wonder what immediate relevance this topic has to you as a manager. The answer is that you are part of the multiple stakeholders; in fact you are a stakeholder in several different interest groups. First, you are, as a part-time student, a direct consumer. Second, you may be using, or considering using, the system for your children. Even if this is not the case, if you pay UK taxes you are supporting the system. Thirdly, as an employer, your organization is likely to be using the products of that system. In any of these roles, you may consult league tables as part of forming your opinion on the relative merits of various institutions. Knowing how such tables are constructed is part of making an informed decision.

Beyond the sports industry, ‘league tables’ produced by third parties showing ranked performance of comparable organizations by particular criteria have been produced for commercial organizations for many years — for example, stock exchange share indexes. They may be seen to provide valuable information for consumer choice, as well as for management decision-making and policy monitoring. However, the effects of such tables are not always predictable and their value may be subject to criticism on the grounds of the sources of data they contain, relationships which they imply or impact that they are intended to have. While the latter critique may reflect, predominantly, differences in value systems, there are more objective ‘technical’ factors which are especially relevant to managers.

League tables comparing the performance of schools in England in terms of truancy rates and examination results, published since 1992, attracted such criticism from many stakeholders — head teachers and school governors, classroom teachers, parents and students. Leaving aside ideological aspects, some technical considerations deserve note as they apply in any context where management information is collected using forms or surveys without detailed qualitative data to support analysis and interpretation. For example:

- **Unclear definition of terms leading to unreliable supply of data.** Truancy league tables were produced from details of ‘unauthorized absence’ supplied by schools to the Department for Education. Where a child was sick, and therefore could not submit a letter requesting authorized absence, some head teachers included their absence in the returns and others did not. A more fundamental question arose in relation to very young children — could those under nine years of age really be said to be ‘truants’ if they had not had permission to be away from school?

- **Unreliable data collection instruments** — the forms for reporting ‘truancy’ were felt by many head teachers to be unduly complex (there were 17 different symbols for types of absence), leading to non-completion or inaccurate completion. Assessing the impact of this sort of ‘error’ requires careful pilot studies and post-survey reliability tests, and if they are undertaken they may lead to adjustment or weighting of the raw data, making the resulting tables more complex to interpret.

- **Uneconomic data collection activity** — compiling ‘truancy figures’ required pupils to be registered twice a day, a procedure that many schools had long since replaced as an uneconomic use of time. This was another source of uneven completion of returns and hence unreliability of data.
Excessively simple data analysis and presentation – tables showing school performance in terms of average score in public examinations (Advanced or ‘A’ levels and GCSE, General Certificate in Secondary Education) were first published in 1992. An important criticism of this focus on ‘outcomes’ of the system is that the tables reveal nothing about the ‘value added’ to children by schools. They do tell us what examinations had been taken, which can be of some interest, but we may simply conclude that children at each school have achieved what could have been predicted by measures of ability and other characteristics when they entered the school. They do not reveal whether children have under-achieved in those terms, nor whether a school with a relatively high number of pupils who might have been expected to attain lower than average numbers of grades of passes (children from lower socio-economic groups or whose first language is not English, for instance) have in fact been helped to exceed these expectations. Nor do they tell us much about current school effectiveness; exam passes reflect experience over several years of schooling and therefore the latest results cannot tell a school how to intervene to improve performance next year or the year after.

Taking these sorts of shortcoming into account, as a school manager (for example, head teacher or member of the board of governors), how would you interpret your school’s position on truancy or examination league tables? What management action would you feel was needed to improve or maintain your position? And as a potential consumer (parent, student), how much importance should you place on league tables when choosing a school, in comparison with other factors not reported in this way? This is a huge and long-standing area of debate in education policy and research, which points to the need for great sophistication when measuring the effect of educational processes on children’s learning and formal attainment. The publication of crude league tables may even mislead those whom the tables were supposed to inform.

Tables 1 and 2 are league tables. They have been carefully assembled by statisticians working with government data. Notice how many footnotes are necessary to explain the assumptions made. Very simple tables without such footnotes may be misleading, such as the school truancy tables mentioned above. It is debatable how useful any league tables are when we do not know exactly how they are constructed.

Regression analysis, a statistical technique that you met in the analysis of productivity in Unit 5, Section 6.4, can help with the construction of PIs for use in more sophisticated league tables, provided its advantages and disadvantages are understood. Cave et al. (1991) explain the pitfalls of simple regression in an elegant educational example (see Box 1). Research output per staff member is likely to be judged by the number (and usually the quality) of publications produced over a given time period.
Table 1 Enrolment rates in education at ages 17 and 21, 1988/89

(Source: Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 1992, p. 126)
Table 2  Educational expenditure, 1989
(in local currency and at current prices)

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(Source: Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 1992, p. 137)
Box 1 Regression analysis

Suppose that data are available on research output per staff member in a number of university or polytechnic departments within the same discipline. Suppose also that the size of each department is known. The data can then be represented as in Figure 1, where each point shown represents an observation of research output per staff member in a department of the indicated size. The average level for all departments is shown by the horizontal line in the figure. We may formulate the hypothesis that there are features of the production process for research which imply that larger departments produce more research per staff member. This hypothesis can be tested by fitting a line, using standard techniques of statistical regression, through the points in the figure. This line is shown by RR. The closer the fit of points to the line, the greater the proportion of variation in research output per staff member 'explained' by size. But it is highly unlikely that the fit will be perfect. Other factors than size will influence research output per capita; examples are the availability of research funding and equipment, the time and effort devoted to research, and purely random factors.

How can regression analysis be used to improve or refine performance indicators? Given the data at our disposal, the simplest approach would involve comparing each department with the average. On this basis department A would be below average and department B above average. But we may wish to 'correct' our measure of research output per staff member for the size of department. On this basis, department A will have performed better than expected, while department B will have performed worse than expected. Running the regression of research output per staff member on size has enabled us to identify departures above and below the expected output level for a department of any given size.

Regression analysis thus offers two advantages. It makes it possible to test hypotheses concerning factors which affect the production process in higher education. Second, it provides a more refined basis for evaluating the performance of an individual department by comparing the actual outputs with the expected outputs for a given level of inputs. However, it is important to avoid drawing the wrong policy conclusions from the second approach. In Figure 1, A's performance is better than expected and B's worse. In certain circumstances we might be prepared to describe A's behaviour as praiseworthy and B's as blameworthy. But it still remains true that department B has a higher research output per staff member than department A. If the purpose of performance measurement in higher education is not so much to reward and blame but to achieve an efficient allocation of resources, then the (hypothetical) lesson that large departments have a higher research output per staff member is the more significant one.

(Source: Cave et al., 1991, pp. 31–32)

Figure 1: Regression analysis in a hypothetical example
(Source: Cave et al., 1991, p. 33)
Next, we suggest that you read the article by Johnes and Taylor in the Reader, on the construction and interpretation of performance indicators using multiple regression. You do not need to understand the equations given if you are not intending to use this form of analysis, but you should follow the logic of the argument as the separate possible contributing variables are accounted for.

**Commentary**

The article describes how the question of value added in education (at least for undergraduates) might be tackled using statistical techniques. It takes a pragmatic approach to this important issue, building on data that are obtainable or already available. There is no claim that teaching quality is necessarily being measured by the procedures described, although it is logical to assume that teaching quality is closely related to good degree results.

The last section—'Construction of a performance indicator based upon degree results'—is probably the least approachable. The key point about it is related to the problems illustrated in Box 1 about drawing false conclusions from simple regression. A league table based purely on degree results would be misleading because we know from what we have seen so far that universities do not achieve these results from similar inputs. Just as, in Box 1, the smaller department (A) was performing well above average given its disadvantages, some universities are producing better degree results than would be expected if all the other important variables could be controlled.

Such control is exerted statistically via the somewhat strange expression 'degree result - degree result' which represents the difference between a university's actual results (the raw data) and the results that would have been expected if the effects of the six important variables discussed in the article were included. This difference is assumed to represent the 'value added' by the university, and it has been used to produce the league table shown. However, the league table entries are alphabetical, instead of being ranked according to scores. The authors explain that the performance indicator they have constructed does not necessarily tell us much about performance differences. The PI is technically an unexplained residual, a term explaining its derivation from a form of statistical modelling. It reminds us that it might be hiding a further important explanatory variable. Clearly, any use of such a PI for management decision making depends on understanding the assumptions on which its construction is based.

**SAQ 1**

If you are at all nervous about this part of the unit, rewrite a section of the league table (Table 4 in the article) to show the top five performers, according to the 'degree result - degree result' indicator, for each year. Then list three universities which seem to have shown marked improvement over the three years. Have any shown a marked deterioration? Answers are at the end of this unit.

**Activity 1**

Make a few notes on how many of the variables discussed in this section are likely to be relevant when constructing performance indicators for MBA courses. Keep this for reference later on in the unit.
3 Management education and development: a special case?

3.1 The manager as a professional

Management education is a particularly interesting case for further evaluation because its objectives and stakeholders are perhaps even less clear than in other subject areas. You might ask why it is taught in universities at all. Management is surely a vocational subject, rather than a traditional academic discipline. Managers aspire to professional status, which would suggest that they should create and oversee their own curricula, through a professional institution, in the way that lawyers and medics do. Yet business studies is one of the most popular undergraduate degrees for applicants in the UK today and the MBA market expanded by 500% in the late 1980s. The demand from the ‘customer’ is certainly there, and the demonstrable need for education is reflected in the oft-quoted figures in the Constable and McCormick report of 1987 - 21% of managers have degrees, 36% of middle managers have had no training since starting work.

Now read the article ‘Professionalizing management and managing professionalization’ by Michael Reed and Peter Anthony in the Reader. It illustrates the problematic relationship between industry and academia, but ends on a positive note.

Commentary

This article contains three interwoven themes. The first, how managers ought to be educated and developed, is the most relevant to your study of this unit. The other two, the historical context and the professionalization issues, are well described and may be of general interest to you. The language is more academic than everyday, as might be expected in a journal published primarily for the academic community. You may need to keep a dictionary handy!

The authors trace the influences of the various stakeholders in management education. The details of the historical developments are not particularly pertinent; it is the ongoing politicized nature of the debate that it is worth noting.

The professionalization issues may intrigue you if you belong to one of the established professions such as architecture, accountancy or science. Or you may safely choose to ignore the section ‘Managing professionalization’.

The authors’ views on the need for ethics and cultures to be considered agree with those expressed in Unit 4 on the morality of appraisal and to some extent with Unit 2 on the need to avoid seeing managerial decision making as a purely rational process.

Having listed many reasons for conflict in the management arena, towards the end of the section ‘Restructuring managerial work’ the authors become more optimistic, referring to ‘considerable intellectual and possibly institutional space in which a fundamental re-evaluation of management education and its links with the professionalization of managerial work and its associated occupational structures is now possible’. The case is then made for academics from a wide variety of disciplines to campaign actively for a wider, more relevant management education curriculum. The B889 Course Team agrees, and believes that student contributions to this debate should also be welcome.
This picture of the hostility between stakeholders in management education may be a little too bleak. Research by one of the authors (Lewis, 1991) found that MBA students did expect and require their courses to introduce them to new ways of thinking about management, as well as to improve their effectiveness in their current roles.

Three samples of MBA students from three different business schools were asked their views on a list of ten aspects of management education. The exact wording was 'the following aspects of management education have been studied in previous research with employers. Here we are interested in seeing how relevant they are to MBA students. For each aspect, please answer the following question ... how important is it to you that this aspect should be part of your MBA?'

A five-point rating scale was provided, from 5 = very important to 1 = not at all important. A total of 185 students completed this part of the questionnaire. Aspects were ranked for popularity according to how many students scored them as 4 or 5. These rankings also held when only the 5s were taken into account. The two most popular aspects in all three samples were 'Giving access to a range of ways of doing things rather than the specific way of any organization' and 'Introducing new ideas in management'. New ideas were rated 4 or above by between 84% and 87% of all respondents. Chief executives from 200 top companies also gave 'Introducing new ideas in management' top ranking (Thomson, 1987).

Returning to the notes you made in Activity 1 about performance indicators for evaluating MBAs, we might speculate that, if league tables were created for MBAs, 'A' level grades would not be relevant, although entrance qualifications might or might not be. How would you take account of relevant work experience as an input? Do you think that the percentage of candidates awarded a distinction would be a valid output measure? This might depend on how many were seriously aiming for this standard.

The confusion that exists in the UK about higher education and management education is shown in the various ways proposed to evaluate them. Systems thinking is offered as a way to understand this in the next section by a colleague, Sylvia Brown, who also has contributed the associated commentary, SAQs and activities. The conclusions reached may be found controversial in certain quarters.

### 3.2 Case Study – design of vocational education systems: a systems science contribution to the ‘competences’ debates

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3 Management education and development: a special case?

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This case study was written for an audience familiar with systems concepts and research. For further information, here are the rest of Ulrich's questions:

- What ought to be the system's measure(s) of success?
- What should be the source of power to change these measures (i.e. where should decisions be taken and by whom)?
- What system components should be under the control of the decision-power?
- What resources and conditions should not?
- What kind of expertise should flow into that design?
- Who ought to guarantee that the system will be built as designed?
- To what degree should these stakeholders and constituents be independent, i.e. free from the premises and commitments of those directly involved in design?
- Whose world-view should prevail in the design of the system?

As Brown stated in a subsequent working paper, presented to the BAM (British Academy of Management) conference in 1993: 'It will be apparent that these are all political questions applicable to the nature of the public education system as a whole. The answers to some of them could be embarrassing for particular stakeholders in particular systems.'

Please ensure your understanding of some of the arguments in this case study by attempting the following SAQs before proceeding to the activities based on it.

**SAQ 2**

What does a standard learning curve look like?

**SAQ 3**

In what sense is System 1 similar to a training system?

**SAQ 4**

Is System 1 a training or an education system?
SAQ 5

Why can a full time, pre-vocational management and business education not act as either a vocational education or a training system?

SAQ 6

According to the case study, why is the current UK ‘VET’ (Vocational Education and Training) system in confusion?

SAQ 7

Why is it important to decide whether there is to be a national education system or a national state training system?

The main purpose of the case study was to emphasize that using output measures will be fruitless unless you know what the system they are supposed to be evaluating is for. If the output measures are so simplistic as not to measure what you want to know or to be operating at the wrong system level or in the wrong subsystem, so much the worse.

Output measures of the success of a system are stated necessarily in terms of its goals – what the system is intended to do.

Activity 2

Using the concept of a root definition (a succinct description of a system, stating its main purpose), think of as many descriptors of a training system as you can.

Comment

There can be as many answers to this question as are useful to a given enterprise. Some possibilities are given below.

Some versions of training systems

- A process to change habitual behaviours from initial state I to target state T.
- A process to transform trainees without skills into ‘the trained’, with skills.
- A process to facilitate learning so that resultant behaviour contributes to the attainment of the company’s goals and objectives.
- A process to create human assets that can provide sources of factors of production.
- A process to improve the quality of workplace performance.
- A process to create or enlarge the stock of skills ‘owned’ by an enterprise or the nation.
Activity 3

Consider the following system descriptors. Which of them would be helpful if you were designing a system from scratch and which less so?

System descriptors of 'vocational education'

- A process to transform candidates without particular professional knowledge into candidates with such knowledge.
- A process to develop the skills of the professional in the trainee.
- A process to instil in the trainee the norms and values of the profession.
- A process to provide an apprenticeship with professionals.
- A process to prepare candidates for entry to a particular trade or profession.

Comment

The definitions become successively more loose, less precise, from first to last. The more imprecise they become, the easier it will be to design a system that does not produce what you had hoped. The whole point of a root definition is that it logically entails its constituent elements and sub-objectives. The final item in the list above gives no clear guidance at all, whereas it is clear from the first vocational training descriptor that the first task would be to discover which professionals are considered skilled and which incompetent. The next task might be to analyse the differences between them in terms of exactly what skills particular 'expert' professionals use. Phase 3 would be to find out how they became skilled and the others did not, and so on. In the light of this knowledge, a system to transform the unskilled into the skilled could be described and built.

Activity 4

Using Ulrich's criteria, describe a training course with which you are reasonably familiar. How useful are his criteria for uncovering weaknesses in its design?
4 Evaluation of management training

In this section another colleague, Chris Mabey, discusses the evaluation of specific training courses in an industrial context. You will perhaps notice that there are less than the usual number of academic references, because of the lack of publications in the area. You may also be interested to know that when we were making this course we had more enquiries from organizations about this area than any other, all hoping that we might have some answers to questions about how to evaluate long-term management development initiatives against organizational performance. Most of these enquiries, as you might expect, came from training managers who were eager to justify their projects and budgets.

4.1 Introduction

Word comes that the chief executive has commissioned an internal audit of all the company's training programmes. Or your department head drops by in order to outline a new project for you as part of your ongoing development: to evaluate the management training conducted by your organization. Although these assignments sound innocuous enough, they are likely to prompt in all but the most naïve individual some stirrings of suspicion. Who wants to know about the effectiveness of training? Why the sudden interest in such outputs? And how are the evaluation data to be used? These are not unreasonable questions, but the answers are not always as readily apparent. At the very least, the training department might have just cause for feeling somewhat nervous about the heightened scrutiny that their performance will be attracting. If prone to paranoia, the news might be interpreted more widely by the organization as signalling the end of the status quo, a thorough review of training often being associated with leadership changes and/or the introduction of radically new ways of operating.

So what are the likely objectives for an evaluation exercise of this nature? We have already seen that an organization is made up from a number of stakeholder groups, and each of these is likely to have different reasons for evaluating training. Senior management are obviously interested in value for money. As 'sponsors' of the training activities, they will be asking whether the new skills and knowledge lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness among trainees. Are we getting fewer customer complaints? Are we selling more products? Are we recruiting better calibre managers as a result of the interview training? Because line managers are also judged on such things, they are likely to have an equally instrumental view of training outputs. Part of the equation for them will be the amount of time that trainees have spent away from the job, and the 'lost' opportunities that this represents. Despite the nervousness referred to above, those responsible for training in the organization would probably welcome evaluation: it can provide valuable feedback to the tutors on the success of different elements of the learning process; it can help course designers assess the precision and relevance of training objectives for the target audiences concerned, and the involvement of tutors and trainers in the process of evaluation can serve to extend their critical expertise and level of professionalism as providers of training. Systematic evaluation of training usually requires ongoing collaboration with the local management; this forging of relationships with internal customers is an indirect but beneficial outcome of evaluation exercises for the training
department. Finally, the trainees themselves are an important stakeholder group. Positive results from an evaluation exercise will naturally enhance their motivation to participate in future training activities, and cause them to attribute worth to the training already undertaken. Indeed, the very fact of being asked about their experience of training is likely to be motivational because it signals that the organization cares enough to consult them.

Already we can see that the routine task of evaluating training is not, in fact, straightforward. Analysis based on the need to justify the costs of training will probably run counter to attempts to establish the level of learning taking place, and feedback concerning the elegance of design will probably not contribute to an understanding of the longer-term impacts of the training in the workplace. Once again, stakeholder interests clash and the clarity of evaluation messages is compromised.

*Evaluation is about making value judgements as well as technical ones and it is about power, since action may involve, at the least, persuading others of the rightness of one’s values first, through to imposing one’s values onto them.*

(Fox, 1989, p. 205)

So it is that different stakeholders will have their own interpretation of why the training evaluation is being undertaken, have competing views about which evaluation criteria should be used, hold their own pet preferences about which methods are best employed to fulfil these functions and possible opposing opinions about which methods are valid. Finally and unavoidably, various stakeholder groups will differ in the weight they place on various evaluation outcomes, depending largely on how they, and the constituent group(s) they represent, are affected by ensuing changes compared with other stakeholder groups.

In other words the way HR interventions are evaluated will be influenced by the perceived fairness of the new normative order (How has my access to rewards, status, authority and power bases been affected?) and social comparison with reference groups (How have reciprocity and exchange relations with significant others been altered?) (Carnall, 1982).

Given the complexities associated with such analysis it is perhaps not surprising that so few organizations carry out systematic evaluations of their training and development activities. Yet even when evaluation research is available it is often ignored. In her book on evaluating the effects of organization change programmes, Legge (1984) gives the following three reasons for this.

- First, the findings may be weak or not interpretable. Particularly when using traditional positivistic methods on ‘soft’ areas like attitude change, it is difficult to arrive at findings which are both internally reliable (can confidently be drawn from a set of data) and externally valid (the conclusions can confidently be generalized to the wider organization). This is presuming, of course, that the particular change programme under scrutiny is being implemented as intended, and that the close monitoring by evaluators is not interfering with the process itself.

Legge concludes that carefully collected qualitative data are used more to give the decision makers apparent respectability than for their real feedback value. As such it can be helpful for the more covert purpose of rallying support, evading responsibilities and postponing decisions.

- Second, normative research in organizational settings, including the evaluation of training programmes, tends to have an in-built conservative bias. This is partly because the commissioning of research itself tends to convey
legitimacy to the training programme and its goals: the assumptions underlying the initiators are not therefore questioned, leading to a non-radical stance. It is also likely that the evaluators will align themselves with the most powerful group which is most opposed to any radical change in the programme. This places them in a cleft-stick situation:

If they take an overtly radical position in their evaluation designs they may lose credibility with the decision-makers ... If, on the other hand, they seek to maximise the utility of their evaluations for the decision-makers (after all, they might argue, what is the point of doing it, if it is not used) they run the risk of adopting a far more conservative stance than they might either desire or be aware of.

(legge, 1984, p. 12)

- Third, evaluation findings are frequently not used because they are not presented in the right format, to the right people at the right time. Consequently, their relevance and usefulness are not recognized or possibly, if they are, the data are still ignored because it unconfirms what the sponsors and administrators of the research wanted to hear. Again, the difficulty here is that those commissioning the evaluation are also those who monopolize the resources to be used for any future initiatives prompted by the results. If this was always true in private business, it is also becoming increasingly true of the public sector.

The situation here varies considerably from service to service, but in schools, for example, the head teacher is likely simultaneously to play a central role in (a) the appraisal of individual teachers, (b) the overall assessment of school performance carried out by the local authority adviser/inspector, and (c) detailed management of the school's finances (under the devolved financial powers of the Local Management Schools initiative). Rank and file teachers could be forgiven for wondering whether these developments will not further enhance the dominance of the head, and for asking how successful their head is likely to be at keeping the concern for quality separate from the concern for economy.

(Pollitt, 1989, pp. 13–14)

Having outlined the difficulties that plague attempts to evaluate training in organizations, we go on now to examine what is meant by evaluation, noting some of the methods that can be used to carry it out and the need to locate the training event in the wider context of the training process. Finally, we offer some guidelines for conducting evaluation which take account of the political complexities discussed so far.

### 4.2 What is evaluation?

Part of the confusion that often arises when debating the merits and demerits of a particular training course is caused by the issue of level. There are at least four different levels (see Figure 2):

1. **Internal validation** assesses whether the training programme achieved what it set out to do.
   - The focus here is entirely internal to the event or activity itself, and concerns such things as the suitability of training material, the effectiveness of tutors and trainers and the physical aspects of the learning environment.

2. **External validation** asks whether the training programme was based on the real requirements of the job. In other words, did those designing the programme accurately identify the training needs of the organization and 'translate' these faithfully into the learning objectives of the training event?
3 Training evaluation incorporates both aspects of validation but goes a step further in measuring the total value of a training course: is it worthwhile, effective, cost-efficient and so on? Invariably this involves some attempt to gauge its impact on the performance of the trainee back in the workplace after the programme by measuring skill changes, knowledge gain and transfer of learning into everyday work routines.

4 Training assessment is the most global dimension of evaluation and refers to the impact of training initiatives on the business objectives of the organization. Training programmes may be internally and externally valid; they may be producing some good behavioural effects in the workplace and yet still not be contributing to the overall performance of the organization. If all the other levels of evaluation are found to be positive, the reason for this lack of impact is probably the wider constraints (cultural, technological, financial) which are offsetting or squeezing out the benefits of the training programmes.

Validating a programme to establish whether it has met its own objectives in terms of enjoyment, interest, learning skills, or gaining knowledge is fairly straightforward. Evaluating the extent to which trainees transfer new skills and knowledge into the workplace is more difficult. There may be intervening variables that prevent this (such as peer-group pressure); or the fault may lie in depending too much on the support and feedback of trainers, perhaps because of a training method that does not develop sufficient confidence in continuing discovery. How often have you seen people struggling with a software procedure that has gone awry and wailing 'It worked when we did it on the course'!? Deciding whether a programme that is successful at the first three levels has made any contribution to the fourth level of organizational success is even more problematic.

Table 3 shows that there are, in fact, different criteria to determine the worth of a training event; there are different people involved in making these judgements; and different people who will wish to use the evaluation data.
Table 3  Training and development: elements of evaluation and criteria of worth

(Source: Adapted from Newby, 1992, p. 24)
Most of the criteria in the first three levels of evaluation concern optimization. In other words, satisfying these criteria will improve the conditions under which trainees do their jobs: having more job-related knowledge and skill, having participated in a stimulating learning event, and having experienced personal development are all likely (although not certain) to enhance an individual’s work performance. This improvement, including the amount learned, might be measured by practical tests, observing behaviour, evaluation interviews and questionnaires. Meeting the criteria specified in the fourth level, together with ‘amount of use made of learning from the third level and ‘level of knowledge or behavioural performance’ from the first/second, all constitute aspects of maximization. Here the focus of attention is the impact of the training event on job performance and organization more generally. These impacts can be determined through various measures of performance (e.g. quality or quantity of output, wastage, sales volume, equipment downtime, accident rates, customer satisfaction); financial indices (e.g. unit costs, return on investments); or personnel measures (e.g. turnover of staff, absenteeism, organizational climate).

When designing and evaluating training programmes much hinges on the criteria chosen, irrespective of level. First, they should be relevant such that the knowledge or skills or attitudes which are required for success in the training event are the same as those required to succeed in real-life situations.

Secondly, they should be reliable and based on consistent measures. A reliable criterion is an equally good measure when it is used by different evaluators, or when it is applied to an individual’s performance on different occasions. The less it relies on subjective interpretation (and therefore the more clearly the performance behaviour is specified), the greater will be its reliability.

### 4.3 Evaluating the training process

Clearly, apart from internal validation, any assessment of the value and success of training programmes needs to take account of the many contextual factors surrounding such an event or activity. Figure 3 encapsulates well the training process, indicating the ‘journey’ of a trainee from the initial identification of learning needs through to the practice of newly won knowledge and skills in the workplace. What this figure demonstrates is the part that different stakeholders play in the delivery of effective training. The right-hand box reflects the experience of the trainee as they proceed through the training activities. Their readiness to learn will be adversely affected if there is a mismatch between their aptitudes and those taught on the course, if the training makes no apparent contribution to their career or personal development goals, if their previous experience of training has been negative and/or if they are sceptical about the opportunities to employ the knowledge and skills being trained. Good tutors will work hard in the early stages of a training event to address these personal concerns, knowing that breaking down some of these barriers is essential to ‘unfreezing’ and reaching a point of receptivity to new ideas and perspectives. However, it could be argued that the ‘real’ work happens both before and after the training work. There the onus is very much upon the sending department to diagnose accurately the learning need and adequately prepare the individual for training. At the very least a pre-course discussion should take place between the trainee and their manager to agree on learning objectives and to discuss the relevance of the training to future job roles and responsibilities. On return to the workplace, the line manager will want to review these objectives, note any additional benefits from the programme and make some joint plans for implementation. Three months or so later on, these plans could be reviewed – preferably as part of an organizational appraisal or career development process. Just as the individual’s experience of the training event will be uniquely mediated by his or her own self-concept, expectations and perceptions, so the quality

For those wishing to pursue techniques for the evaluation of training in more detail, we recommend Newby (1992) and Bramley (1986).
of learning transfer in the workplace will be mediated by the norms and values implicit within the organization’s culture. If learning and development are prized, if consistent effort and resources are devoted to training both on- and off-the-job, if managers are actively involved in the training process and positively reinforce newly acquired skills and knowledge, then the longer-term outcomes of training programmes are likely to be successful.

So how do organizations go about assessing the impact of their training programmes and processes, especially when they are designed to change not only knowledge and skills but also attitudes and values? Box 2 describes how evaluators at British Airways attempted to ‘quantify the intangibles’.
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4.4 Planning and carrying out evaluation

We started this section by remarking on the complexity of evaluating training primarily because of the competing interests of stakeholder groups. Having reviewed some of the approaches to evaluating both the training programme and the training process, what guidance can be given to those charged with evaluating training in their own organization which respects and indeed harnesses these political realities? By way of summary, the following steps are suggested, borrowed in part from Legge’s (1984) normative contingency approach evaluating organizational change.

Figure 4 shows a set of key questions that evaluators should ask before embarking on the evaluation exercise (see left-hand column). The right-hand column denotes the key steps to be undertaken by the designers of the training programme or activities who may in some cases also be the evaluators. You can see that each of these steps flows from the answers agreed upon in the left-hand column.

The following points should be borne in mind.

1. Given that there will be multiple stakeholders (sponsors, designers, trainers, line management, trainees, customers, and so on) time will probably be needed to reach agreement on the objectives and success factors of the planned training intervention. If agreement cannot be negotiated, the evaluation project is unlikely to succeed and you as evaluator will be in a no-win situation.
Given consensus on these purposes, the most appropriate approaches to evaluation need to be explored, recognizing that alternative methods imply different design principles and values. For instance, an interpretative approach (as against quantitative data gathering) canvases the views and opinions of a wide range of staff affected by the change in the organization. While this would probably yield a rich 'slice of life' and reflect the multiple realities of different interest groups, it is less easy to generalize and the breadth of opinion may set up an unwarranted wave of positive expectations which are difficult to meet. Nevertheless, the method is rapid, real, apparently non-élitist and gives fleet-footed policy makers room for manoeuvre. Once these values implications have been confronted an approach can be designed which best matches the functional requirements of the evaluation exercise, checking once again with the stakeholders that the chosen methods will indeed generate data that are of interest and value to them. If not, there is still time to abandon the evaluation and save wasted effort and expense.

Even when all these prior questions have been answered and the change activities are under way, evaluators need to continue to keep in touch with stakeholder groups; to step back and check that evaluation objectives are being met and the desired sort of feedback data is being collected. Paradoxically, this is especially the case for evaluation projects where researchers and clients are working closely together. It is here that the close proximity of researchers can interfere with the dynamics being observed.

The success of an evaluation project can be endangered at any one of three points during planning, design or implementation if the pertinent questions are not asked and satisfactory answers given. It is the job of the evaluators to pose these sometimes awkward questions to the stakeholders concerned.

However – as you have seen in this and other MBA courses – decision making rarely follows a rational problem-solving pathway in organizations and this is more true at the inception of change initiatives than anywhere else. Such decisions frequently resemble a 'garbage can' into which problems and solutions of various participants will be dumped (Cohen et al., 1976). These might be prior commitments and alliances, the need to justify past actions, scapegoating, cementing loyalties, recruiting, socializing and game playing. While Figure 4 itself looks sequential and logical, it is built on the premise that such competing interests will always be at stake and it is for those initiating the training, and any accompanying evaluation, to secure as much clarity and unanimity as possible about motives and required outcomes from the outset.

If for any reason this has not happened – possibly because the evaluator has been called in after the training programme has been implemented – the decision tree is still useful. Legge (1984) maintains that in these circumstances the researcher's first task is to determine what evaluative designs have been ruled out, given the post facto nature of the study, and what data cannot be generated and by definition what questions cannot be answered. This clears the ground and enables agreement to be reached with the stakeholders over what designs are still feasible and whether they serve a useful purpose.

How far can the frameworks discussed in this section be extended to consideration of management training purchased outside the organization? Are they applicable to management education courses? We would argue that advanced management education courses such as an MBA aim to provide concept mastery
as well as functional skills, so they are a hybrid of education and vocational training (or rather updating). In terms of managerial improvement as an outcome, they can be fitted into Figure 4.

Just as objectives and specifications are important for management training, an organization will gain more benefit from management education courses taken by its staff if its decision makers are clear about what certain courses and qualifications can and cannot be expected to produce. You would soon realize that a cheap training course run by unknown consultants and claiming to turn anyone with or without formal qualifications into a potential senior manager in a fortnight was fraudulent. But it is much harder to judge the relative values of candidates with BTEC, HND, CNAA DMS or NVQ Level 4 in management or business studies, to name but a few of the qualifications available in the UK today. We should also consider the relative merits of the German High School Diploma or the various French qualifications. It is very difficult for an employer to judge the merits of such an eccentric system, or set of systems, when recruiting managers or recommending that junior managers with no formal qualifications should be sponsored on part-time courses.

**Activity 5**

You have just taken over responsibility for a department where a group of junior managers have been sent on a two-day intensive advanced marketing module run by a reputable organization. Your predecessor confides that in sending so many on the course, she hoped to ‘kill several birds with one stone’. For those involved in marketing already their capabilities in the area would be extended. For the others, either they needed to understand more about the subject to liaise with marketing people in the future, or they were ‘high flyers’ who need to know something about every area in order to become the strategists of the future. What output and outcome measures might you use to judge the success of the short course for each of these three categories? You need to make decisions in six months’ time about using the course next year for several departments.
5 Management development

You may have wondered why we have not discussed the topic of management development before in this unit. The answer is that the term has become so general that it has lost much of its meaning. It has become a blanket description used for everything from a system of performance appraisal for individuals that is linked to career development, to a particular type of enlightened human resource strategy practised by organizations. To discuss the topic sensibly we must first be clear whether we are talking about an individual or about a group of staff.

Your own management development as an individual is likely to be a virtually lifelong process, and one that is not necessarily tied to any one organization. It is as much to do with your own personal psychological development as a learner, as it is to do with the particular demands of a current employer. It involves learning about your own strengths and weaknesses as a manager. But your working life cannot be completely disconnected from the rest of your personal life, so management development in this individual sense is closely related to personal growth, which you may think of in terms of Maslow's familiar 'self-actualization'.

Once you have identified your managerial strengths and weaknesses and their connections with the rest of your life, you can, with advice, decide how best to proceed with your ambitions and improve in key areas. However clear your objectives, much will depend on finding opportunities for growth. As growth occurs (or fails to occur) your objectives will change. Management development, when used in this sense, is about individual career performance. Only you can evaluate whether your own management development is proceeding to your satisfaction, although peer, senior and subordinate feedback on your current and recent performance are likely to be essential components.

Management learning contracts are more public and systematic versions of the regular private career review. You diagnose your developmental needs over the next set period of time, and then decide what you will do to fulfil them. Diagnosis may be aided by professionals, but the decisions will be yours, based on personal commitment. Your decisions may involve training or education, a change of work responsibilities to broaden your experience, or a search for opportunities to practise newly acquired desired behaviours. Often all these opportunities for growth and development may be combined. Although many good organizations support such an approach to management development, perhaps through the provision of mentoring systems, the focus and emphasis of a management learning contract is still on you as the individual manager developing yourself. Learning contracts relate to the needs of the organization only in as much as they relate to your aspirations to internal promotion rather than moving outside, and in how much the feedback from influential people within the organization will have its interests at heart.

Management development is also, equally often, used to refer to the policies, or even the general attitudes, of an organization to its staff. A large research project called 'Management development: a framework for improved business performance' looked at how 150 British companies handle management development. The project report (Wille, 1990) concluded that:

... in much of the best practice we saw, companies perceived management development as subsumed in what we have called total employee development. This in turn means that total quality management, team based
management, organization development, culture change, communication cascading are all involved in the central task of growing people, who are seen by the most successful companies as appreciating assets, whose development is a form of currency.

(Wille, 1990, p. v)

One of the most striking findings was that, contrary to the investigators’ expectations, many companies no longer restricted their ideas about employee development to so-called ‘high flyers’ or even just to all managers.

When the term 'management development' is used in this sense in relation to organizations we might hope that we could evaluate it by more objective criteria. As part of the human resources strategy of an organization, its effectiveness can be judged in various ways, as discussed in Unit 4. You may remember that, for example, Fox and McLeay (Unit 4, Section 7.2) found a statistical relationship between successful financial performance and a high degree of integration between human resource management and corporate strategy. This suggests that a human resource strategy emphasizing management development but also relating this to the corporate strategy of the organization should lead to success. Schemes such as IIP ( Investors In People), now popular in the UK, require organizations to make fully explicit the links between individual career development and organizational objectives. As long as accreditation for such schemes is based on thorough investigation of the actual practices occurring, as well as of the relevant documentation, it could become a possible indicator of the amount of management development that is in place. It should be possible for managers interested in evaluating management development to tease out evidence about how many people are being developed successfully in directions that they and the organization wish to go.
6 Evaluating your own management education

6.1 Types of evaluation

Evaluation is an applied academic subject in its own right, with an extensive literature. The evaluation of policy issues, social programmes, training courses and educational systems are all established areas. A useful categorization of styles of evaluation of management education, training and development has been developed by Easterby-Smith (1986, revised 1990). He reminds us that the purpose of an evaluation will determine how it is most effectively carried out. Four main purposes of evaluation are described (see Figure 5). According to Easterby-Smith, different types of stakeholders are likely to prefer different styles of evaluation. The gap in the middle of the four circles is intended to represent what the author calls 'the hollow ritual of using evaluations without having any clear idea of why they are being conducted'. It is also claimed that confusing two or more of these purposes in the same evaluation project can produce irrelevant or misleading results.

The four main purposes are proving, controlling, improving and learning. Proving is the most obvious, where those designing, running or sponsoring a process (or you may prefer to think of a course as a product) for educating, training or developing managers wish to prove that their process is successfully fulfilling its set objectives. A proving style of evaluation sets out to find out whether sufficient people are showing improved skill levels, or emerging with qualifications, or achieving their development contracts. The outputs examined for training, as described in Section 4, are reasonably straightforward. Complex final outcomes such as better overall management performance would be far more difficult to investigate, but could also be part of a proving evaluation.

Controlling refers to monitoring standards delivery. Designers of processes will wish to know whether the process is taking place as they had hoped, so that, for example, suitable trainers or facilitators are being appointed and are performing well, to the predetermined schedule. Our practice of monitoring (re-marking) of a selection of tutor-marked assignments serves this function. If a controlling evaluation finds poor standards, it is obviously unlikely that a proving evaluation
will find satisfactory outcomes from the same process. (At least unless the way the transformation works is very poorly understood!) In order for useful conclusions to be drawn, the proving and controlling aspects of the evaluation would have to be kept logically separate during the analysis of its results.

Improving the current process is when the deliverers or an outsider representing sponsors investigate outputs and outcomes with a view to making practical suggestions to improve effectiveness and efficiency. The product or process is not under threat. Once again, overall objectives are not necessarily questioned, so no double loop learning needs to take place. Participants as learners probably can make a substantial contribution to an improving evaluation.

Learning evaluations take place mostly during longer processes and can result in adjustments that improve learning for present and future participants. For example, learners can be explicitly encouraged to reflect on what they have learned at specific times, instead of it being assumed that they will find time to do so. Trainers and facilitators can be told when their efforts are not helping as intended, and how the participants feel things could be done better (faster, or in more depth with more practical examples). Our tutor-marked assignments are designed partly to help you evaluate your own learning, as well as for us to 'measure' it. Your tutor's comments are meant to help you improve, by explaining how a grade was awarded.

Learning evaluations are the most valuable for the organization, because they can question the whole purpose of the process, and can take account of unexpected but important outcomes, especially those that are beneficial. For example, at a training level, participants often value sharing common difficulties on an in-company training course, because they get to know each other better. In the future, they will have a wider network of trusted colleagues on whom they can call for advice. However, the trainers would not have meant the tasks to be quite so difficult, nor listed future networking as a desired outcome. They may have thought that such networking had happened already, or have forgotten its importance, or felt they could not produce it reliably.

In education, questions of 'input' can be raised, such as whether people really needed that course, or had enough previous experience to gain maximum benefit from it, as well as whether it involved anything relevant to the aims of the organization.

### 6.2 Evaluation exercises

In this section you need to decide the levels at which you will work. It could be your total development plan as a manager, whether formal or informal, the progress of your MBA as a programme of studies, or the benefits or otherwise to you of studying this particular course. All of these levels are of interest to us, as they relate to our broader objectives as a school, not purely as a course team. We hope that you will want to work through them all at some time during the course, even if you lack the time to do more than one level at the moment.

As we work through the various areas you might cover, you should be reminded of possible frameworks from previous parts of the course.

**Questions for reflection about your total development plan**

- Do you have a total development plan? How explicit is it?
- Is it known to, or negotiated with, your organization?
Do you have a mentor, or anyone with whom you agree your developmental objectives? Is this linked to appraisal?
Do you have a management learning contract, or anything similar?
When choosing courses, whether in-house or externally, can you get enough information to decide what will suit your plan?
When you study, are you learning to learn, to become a more independent learner? Do you know under what circumstances you learn best?
Can you attach weights to any of these 'variables' in order to do any cost-benefit analysis?

Development is a continual process, so you can evaluate some outputs but not the final outcome, at least not until you retire! Your objectives will probably change, so you will need to show double loop learning. Can you think of an example of this? The standards you set yourself will vary according to your knowledge of what is achievable and what potential you believe you have. External influences from your organization and your personal life may impinge considerably at various times. Valued outputs will include complex emotions and feelings about satisfaction, as well as concrete evidence on projects, positions and qualifications successfully achieved. You may argue that evaluation hardly applies to the management development process, but unless you stop and review your working life in some way occasionally, you are unlikely to gain from your experience.

When you are monitoring your own progress, how good a sensor are you? How honest can you be about your objectives, and your potential power as an actuator?

The Open Business School MBA Programme

Your progress in our MBA Programme involves a shorter time-scale than your own total development plan, but it could still cover seven years and a great many components! How will you evaluate it – for yourself, for colleagues, for more junior staff? Who is the customer, if your fees are entirely paid? Would you send very senior staff, if it was up to you?

Try to think back to your objectives in enrolling. How clear were they? Have they been fulfilled so far? Have they changed?

Did you choose our MBA over other types of delivery or purely over other distance-taught courses? Was the delivery process important, or was the content or the qualification the main aim, however delivered? Did you perhaps consider other more specialist postgraduate degrees, or not studying for a formal qualification at all? What were the opportunity costs? Did our courses fit with other forms of management development such as in-house programmes and did this matter to you? Did you have enough information to choose carefully? (Remember the 4IA model from Unit 6 here.) Even qualitative information reduces uncertainty.

Was your final choice completely rational, taking many or all of the above factors into account?

Are you learning to learn? Are you achieving transfer of training, that is, are you using new ideas from the MBA Programme at work? What is the reaction of your organization? Is anyone interested in your progress and your new discoveries, or is there any negative feedback?
Has the MBA Programme shown emergent educational properties that you had not expected? If so, what are they, and are they beneficial?

Have you used the QIC system described in Unit 7 to give feedback to us about product service and quality? Is feedback from tutors motivating?

Will the qualification be valued? Are there MBA league tables? We have seen some for salary rises gained by young MBA graduates who had little work experience before taking their qualifications. We suspect they do not show PIs that will interest and be of direct relevance to you. What would you like them to show, bearing in mind that there is no absolute standard?

In Section 2 the OBS mission was mentioned. The current (1994) version is reproduced below, so you can reflect upon whether the MBA Programme is contributing effectively to the mission of its organization.

To be the leading UK business school in terms of improving the quality of management, by building on The Open University’s recognized excellence in distance teaching, and by:

1 Providing high quality management education and development
2 Providing high quality student and sponsor support
3 Advancing the body of knowledge about management by research and scholarship
4 Creating an environment in which all staff are valued, developed and adequately resourced.

B889 itself

This course necessarily reflects our view, as the Course Team, of the subject. The point of a university course is to introduce new ideas and theories that are of relevance to the students. Why did you choose it? Was there any hidden agenda, such as thinking it would be easier than another option?

You may not have known exactly what new ideas you wanted, or you may have had a definite idea of what a course with this title would contain. Either way, you might have been mistaken. You may be struggling or you may find the whole thing too easy and familiar. If the course is to be successful over several years, we have to react to your views. Our feedback loops and sensors must be reliable and valid.

Our standards must also be clear, and these are established by academic debate, within the Course Team, the MBA Programme and the faculty and with external expert assessors. If you complain that the course is too difficult, we will not automatically reduce the content, but we will investigate how we can teach it better, or ask fairer questions when assessing your performance in assignments and the exam.

What sort of action potential does the course have? Have you achieved any transfer of training? How well have you achieved each unit’s objectives? Have you passed the TMAs satisfactorily? How important are grades to you, as long as you pass the course? Is this different from the undergraduates whose results produced the league tables in Section 2? Has the course helped your long-term development as a manager?
Activity 6

Finally, choose one of the evaluation levels you have used from this section, and explicitly justify the key criteria you applied.

Comment

You may be interested to know about how we evaluate courses and programmes. Our PIs include:

- the overall popularity of a course (number of students registered each year)
- complaints
- pass rates
- financial indicators
- student satisfaction ratings
- drop-out
- workload ratings
- students’ views on individual components
- transfer of training reported
- feedback
- perceived value relative to aspirations
- achievement of course objectives
- QICs received
- audits
- new course surveys
- informal feedback from tutors and students (especially at Residential Schools).

In your opinion, are our feedback loops working? How would you tell? Over what time-scale should they work?
References


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Cover

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Text


Figures


Tables

SAQ Answers

SAQ 1

Top five performers 1983:

Cambridge 8.4
Essex 7.2
Nottingham 5.1
York 4.4
Wales 3.7

Three improvers: any three from Strathclyde, Ulster, Bath, London, Reading, Warwick
Possibly deteriorating: Bradford, Keele, Liverpool

SAQ 2

A standard learning curve looks like this:

SAQ 3

Pre-set criteria are used for evaluation, in so far as students must be able to recall a given percentage of the syllabus taught.

SAQ 4

System 1 can be seen as training to pass the exams and as the early part of the curve for certain activities such as making presentations and writing reports. Since it is demonstrably not a mastery system, it can be argued that it is neither a training nor an education system to transfer the content of their course.
**SAQ 5**

Different stakeholders have competing goals but are not acknowledging their differences of interest and value. It is not possible to reconcile the conflicting goals of a national training system and a national education system in a single, simple system. If the goals of competing stakeholders are to be met, a more complex system of combined elements is indicated, as in the diagram below.

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**SAQ 6**

To become trained, supervised and guided practice must occur, in a 'real' context. Full-time college education systems cannot provide this at all other than for a very limited range of activities, such as report writing, and for those only at the 'taster' level. The evidence emerging suggests that even these limited goals are not being achieved. The education arguments have not been presented fully here but rest on the nature of psychological processes of acquisition of knowledge and skills. New knowledge must be 'hooked in' both to what is already known and how it can be applied in practice if it is to be understood properly. Concept mastery systems are designed to ensure that this happens.
This question is very sensitive politically. The only people who can train staff in business and management are employers, although some early parts of a limited range of educational activities could be aped by educators. Knowledge of what are the generic skills and over-arching principles that might apply cross-organizationally could also be provided by employers in principle. Large corporations could, as they have in USA, endow courses or even whole colleges for the purpose. Related research issues have been raised already within the scientific community, where the results of 'near-market', sponsored projects are not shared because they are commercially sensitive, fragmenting the field of knowledge. The fundamental issue is whether education as generating knowledge and facilitating the flowering of minds and ideas is to survive as a good that is accessible to all through state provision.