UNIT 17 UNDERSTANDING POLICY EVALUATION

Structure

17.0 LEARNING OUTCOME

After studying this Unit, you should be able to :

- Understand the meaning, nature, and significance of policy evaluation;
- Discuss the types and approaches of policy evaluation;
- Describe the methods of evaluation;
- Explain the role of evaluating agencies; and
- Bring out the problems of policy evaluation.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

Policy process is quite long and arduous. As noted in the previous units, the policy process comprises of various key stages. It begins with the identification of problems and issues for policies, chalking out various solutions and alternatives, analysing and comparing the possible alternatives, selecting the best possible, putting them into the concrete forms as 'policies', and implementing them effectively, and finally assessing their outcome and impact. In this process, policy evaluation plays a significant role. A modified emphasis on the policy process points to a renewed awareness and sensitivity to the importance of those value-choices, which shape public priorities and commitments to governmental action. During the mid and latter half of the twentieth century, we witnessed intense concern towards evaluative studies with the help of better methodologies, use of scientific methods, inter-disciplinary approaches, and use of electronic data processing systems. Many observers of the functioning of government tend to think that policies may be improved upon, and inefficiencies and maladministration can be corrected on the basis of scientific policy evaluation. However, a viable evaluation of policies and action is a difficult exercise in itself. Sometimes it is fraught with political implications. In this Unit, we will discuss the significance, types, criteria, approaches, and methods of policy evaluation. In addition, we will explain the role of various agencies involved in policy evaluation, and problems in evaluation.

17.2 POLICY EVALUATION: NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The term evaluation embraces a wide range of activities. Evaluations are undertaken in all spheres of life, in informal or formal ways. A distinction is made between the activities of appraisal, monitoring and evaluation. 'Appraisal' is usually taken to mean a critical examination of a programme (or policy) normally before the latter is approved for implementation and funding. Both monitoring and evaluation are undertaken to find out how a programme performs or has performed. Monitoring primarily covers issues of finance, and quality pertaining to inputs and outputs as well as actors, and time used in implementation. Usually, monitoring encompasses some current assessment of the progress of a project, including difficulties in obtaining the expected results; these may possibly be analysed more thoroughly in some subsequent evaluation. 'Evaluation' is a more systematic and scientific attempt with emphasis on impacts and efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, reliability and sustainability. Rossi and Freeman (1993) specify it as a systematic application of social research procedures for assessing the conceptualisation, design, implementation, and utility of social intervention programmes.

Policy evaluation can be briefly described as a procedure that appraises the worthwhileness of a policy, and considers the special context and political and economic variables of the situation. For example, evaluation research may pinpoint the extent to which the goals of a policy are achieved besides identifying the constraints associated with it. Poor results obviously imply lack of effectiveness and efficiency. However, policy evaluation may suggest changes in policy to obtain desired results. Evaluation research also assumes that the programme can be scrapped, if it is not effective.

For a policy maker, policy evaluation is a means of getting the relevant information and knowledge regarding policy problems, the effectiveness of past, and prevailing strategies for reducing or eliminating the problems so as to improve the effectiveness of specific policies. Thus, uncertainty and risk in policy-making are reduced because of such knowledge and information, administrative accountability is enhanced, and administrative control over policy is appropriately increased. Policy evaluation, thus, plays a significant role that starts right from the identification of various policy issues and selecting of the best course out of the various alternatives. Over the years, public policy evaluation has become more sophisticated. From simple analysis of the outcomes and cost-benefit analysis, it has developed its own methodology. Built on the basic principles of maximising income minus costs, new methodology is also focusing on non-monetary policy outcomes, measuring retarding factors, equity, effectiveness, organisational and human factors and so on. Policy evaluation has also become more proactive rather than reactive. Sometimes, it is too late to wait for the outcome of policies after their implementation. As a result, there is an increasing trend towards using preadoption projections or deductive modelling rather than just post-adoption before and after analysis. Moreover, policy evaluation is becoming increasingly inter-disciplinary, drawing on a variety of disciplinary sources for ideas as to means or policies for achieving given goals. Policy evaluation is increasingly using the components of political science, economics, sociology, psychology, law, public administration, business administration, statistics, social work and so on. Thus, there has been an increasing use of behavioural sciences as well as technology.

17.3 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

The simplest criterion, that is most often employed in policy literature and in implementation is, whether statutorily prescribed goals are met, and to what extent? The criteria of evaluation, therefore, focus either on the objectives themselves or on the means/ends relationships between strategies and objectives. Poister adds other performance variables, such as, effectiveness, adequacy and appropriateness. Edward Suchman proposes a five-dimensional scheme for evaluating success or failure, that is, effort, performance, adequacy, efficiency and process. Frohock's, four concepts, criteria for policy evaluation have received a great deal of attention by the scholars: they are equity, efficiency, pareto optimality, and public interest. These concepts will be briefly examined in the subsequent section.

i) **Equity**

Primarily, equity relates to fairness, uprightness and equality. Equity means giving to each man his due, impartiality, a system of supplementary law founded upon precedents and established principles. Equity is a branch of law that provides a remedy where the common law does not apply. Equity, thus, refers to the distribution of effects and effort among different groups in society. For example, the criterion or equity implies the question: are costs and benefits distributed equitably among the different groups? Policies designed to redistribute income, social benefits and employment opportunities in public services are often recommended and evaluated on the basis of the criterion of equity. In most of the democratic systems, right to equality has been provided to the citizens irrespective of caste, creed, sex, and income. The question before the policy evaluators is: how much the policies are able to serve the disadvantaged sections of society and how far the policies have resulted in reducing inequalities. However, to some scholars the concept of equity is not free from controversy. To them, the concepts of equity, fairness and justice are related to political power and involve subjectivity. The processes involving the distribution of power in society influence perceptions about them. Individuals and groups have different values, objectives, and perceptions, What satisfies one person or group may not satisfy another,

ii) **Efficiency**

Efficiency refers to keeping costs down in achieving benefits, as measured by benefits minus costs or benefits divided by costs. In other words, it is the amount of outputs created and their quality in relation to the resources (capital and personnel) invested. It is then a measure of how productively the resources (as converted into inputs) have been used. Efficiency is generally equated with economic rationality. When efficiency is expressed in monetary terms, it refers to the ratio of monetary income from the output to the monetary costs of inputs. The main problem in evaluating efficiency depends on decisions on the amount of various inputs, which the evaluator considers to be reasonable for producing the outputs. Moreover, making judgments about efficiency requires a proper perspective about public policy in terms of identifiable units, such as, programmes, projects or particular work processes. But in many cases, it is difficult to break government agencies and certain policies into smaller units for analysis. Again, there may be problems of subjectivity, measurement or quantification,

iii) **Effectiveness**

Effectiveness refers to the ben[illegible]its [illegible] m alternative public policies. It refers to the extent to which the planned outputs, [illegible] (immediate objectives) and intended impacts are being or have been prod[illegible] Dale (1998) believes that in practice, it may be appropriate to focus on the effects, especially on the outcome side, for two related reasons: i) benefits for the intended beneficiaries are expressed at the point of effects, which make effects a much more significant measure of achievement than outputs; ii) being more directly derived from the inputs and activities of the respective development scheme than are the impacts, the effects will be less influenced by intervening external factors and can be assessed quickly and more reliably.

Measuring, effectiveness is not a simple exercise. It is often difficult to quantify or measure the impact. For example, it is not easy to measure the qualitative impact of educational policies, environment related policies or health policies. We may measure the rate of literacy, but not the level of enlightenment among citizenry. We may quantify the doctor-population ratio or the number of hospital beds, but we cannot easily measure their real impact on level of health.

iv) Pareto Optimality

As noted earlier, efficiency is a condition in which goods are produced at the lowest possible cost and in accordance with the highest preference of consumers. As per the Pareto definition, a given economic arrangement was efficient if there could be no rearrangement that would leave someone better off without worsening the position of others. Under Pareto Optimality, thus, a policy that makes one or several persons better off without hurting anyone else is desirable. However, pareto optimality is not without limitations. Some policies, such as, those related to welfare do not fare well under pareto optimality. Welfare is, in essence, social transfers: some are made better through the distribution of social resources, and distribution requires making some poorer by taking their wealth to make others better off There may not be general acceptability to this objection. It is argued, for example, that giving relief is designed primarily to serve the larger economic and political order by ensuring social stability and only secondarily to give relief to the recipients. Supporting this argument is the fact that welfare policies are typically installed during periods of social disorders. But the general validity of this argument aside, if we view welfare in terms of a conflict - management purpose, then pareto optimality sanctions the distribution: the wealthy gain by preserving social stability, the poor gain by getting assistance. Each class also loses, of course. The wealthy lose money, the poor are fixed more firmly in the system of prevailing inequalities. But one could also maintain that each class receives a net gain, thus remaining true to pareto optimality.

v) Adequacy

Adequacy refers to whether a given level of effectiveness results in the satisfaction of needs or values. According to Theodore, while the policy effectiveness criterion deals with the relationship between policy goals and what is achieved, the adequacy of a policy refers to the relationship between the policy and the problem to which it is addressed. A clear distinction exists between adequacy and effectiveness in the sense that a policy may be judged to be successful in achieving its listed objectives, but it has little impact upon the problem being addressed by the policy. For example, under the policy towards rural upliftment, a number of programmes introduced and implemented, grants are distributed, agriculture development measures are taken, however, rural poverty and unemployment persist. It may be added that the dimension of adequacy may point to the complexity of relationships between costs and effectiveness. Moreover, a policy may meet the criterion, of cost effectiveness, but the resultant outcome in terms of satisfaction level of people turns out to be very poor. This means poor adequacy of the said policy. However, the concept of adequacy too is not free from objections. As in the case of effectiveness and efficiency, the measuring of adequacy is not a simple task; rather it involves more subjectivity and is value-laden. It is not possible to simply quantify the level of adequacy. Systematic studies based on rigorous methodology are required to identify the various dimensions of adequacy of certain policies.

vi) **Public Interest**

Public is interested in the end product or the real outcome of a policy. It has been rightly pointed out that the public is interested in law, not in the laws, in the methods of law, not in the substance; in the sanctity of a contract, not in a particular contract; an understanding based on custom, not in this custom or that. The public is interested in a workable rule, which will define and predict the behaviour of men so that they can make their adjustments (Lippman). Public may often show a keen interest in the process of policy enactment. The public may also be sometimes interested in the issue or phenomenon due to one or the other reason and may not be interested in their self. Thus, it is difficult to express the concept of public interest in a well formulated definition. If we view the public interest on the basis of majority strength, even then it does not come out in a clear sense because it is often the minority in an overall situation that has the victorious stand. Let us suppose that views of people on three different issues, A, B and C are 45 per cent, 30 per cent, and 25 per cent respectively of the total population. It means 45 percent people have interest in issue 'A' and as it has more strength than for issues B and C. Therefore, A is to be accepted. Now if we analyse it from another angle, 55 per cent of the people are against issue A. That is why, it is contended that whatever emerges out of the political struggle is considered public interest. Redford (1958) has suggested three approaches for determining the nature of public interest. Firstly, it is possible that various interest groups bargain and coordinate with each other for reaching an accord for presenting an agreed formula on public interest in areas of conflict on public policies. Secondly, well-accepted and continuously shared interests can be highlighted as public interests. Thirdly, there is a need for evolving a procedure for the representation and balancing of interests for resolving issues, effecting compromise in policy enactment, and for executing policy properly.

vii) **Public Participation/Responsiveness**

Quite close to the concept oi' public interest are the concepts of public participation and responsiveness. Public participation refers to decision-making by the target group, the general public, relevant interest groups or other decision makers whose involvement reflects adherence to democratic procedures for achieving given goals. Consensus and consultation become the central concerns, as the determination of objectives becomes entangled with the search for suitable means and alternatives to achieve those objectives. Active participation leads to better acceptability and implementation becomes less conflict prone. Besides, the concept of responsiveness indicates the acceptance level as well as satisfaction level of a particular section(s) of society. Certain welfare measures, education or health policies, may satisfy the needs of some sections of society, but may not invoke general positive response.

viii) **Sustainability**

Sustainability is an impostant concept in the development context. It refers to the continuation of the practices or work done or measures taken under a policy after the termination of current interventions, under the same or an alternative policy. In more specific terms, sustainability would mean: maintenance of physical facilities produced (such as, roads, buildings, etc.); continued use of physical and intangible facilities (human resource, knowledge, etc.); continued ability to plan. and manage similar work; continued production of the kinds of output created (such as, teachers, doctors, engineers, etc,); maintenance of impacts created (such as, improved health and sanitation, better environment, better consumer awareness, competitiveness in industry, and so on); and inultiplication of effects and impacts. Sustainability is generally found to be a neglected criterion in policy analysis and evaluation. It is always important toutilise the existing or created conditions so as to build upon them the proposed policies and measures. This helps in continuity, efficiency and effectiveness.

Still, the other criteria for policy evaluation are 'relevance' and 'appropriateness'. Relevance reflects the extent to which a policy has addressed the problems of high priority beneficiaries and any other people who might have been its beneficiaries. Thus instead of asking how productively allocated resources have been utilised to that end, one may ask whether the targeted people have received the benefits. In case of long-term policies or programmes, an appropriate issue for enquiry may be whether original priorities are still relevant. There is also the question of consistency of current policies with other policies in the related spheres. Close to the concept of relevance is the criterion of appropriateness. It refers to the worth of theobjectives: Is the policy based upon appropriate values and operates within the zones of acceptance?

It should be noted that different analysts adopt different criteria for policy evaluation; some used different combinations of them. The most common criteria are efficiency, effectiveness, and adequacy in tenns of satisfaction. Most analysts focus on cost-benefit analysis, in combination with impact analysis, and responsiveness by different sections of society. The checklist depicted in the following table provides some idea in this regard.

Table 17.1: Criteria for Evaluation

Type of Criterion	Question	Illustrative Criteria
Effectiveness	Has a valued outcome been achieved?	Units of Service
Efficiency	How much effort was required to achieve an evaluated outcome?	Fixed Costs Fixed Effectiveness
Equity	Are costs and benefits distributed equitably among the different groups?	Pareto Criterion Kaldor-Hicks Criterion Rawls Criterion
Responsiveness	Do policy outcames satisfy the needs, preferences or values of any particular groups?	Consistency with Citizen Surveys
Appropriateness	Are the desired outcomes (objectives) actually worthy or valuable?	Public programmes should be equitable as well as efficient.

Source: Adapted from the U.S. General Accounting Office, Assessing Social Programme Impact Evaluation: **A** Checklist Approach (Washington, D.C. **U.S** General Accounting Office, October 1978). (Exposure draft).

17.4 POLICY EVALUATION: TYPES, APPROACHES AND METHODS

Policy evaluation is an important facet in the policy process. It has always been the endeavour of the policy makers to know about the utility and the outcomes of the policy through evaluation. Different scholars have identified different types and approaches of policy evaluation, besides, different methodologies for the exercise.

17.4.1 Types of Evaluation

Daniel Lerner suggests the following three types of evaluation:

i) **Process Evaluation**

In an exercise of evaluation, policy analysts are concerned with the two questions. Firstly, whether a specific policy has been implemented in accordance with the policy guidelines issued at the time of policy-making or not. Such an evaluation is known as 'process evaluation'. It focuses on two points: whether or not the policy has been aimed and directed at the appropriate and specific target group or target area; and whether or not the different practices and intervention efforts based on strategies have been taken up as specified in the policy design or taken from the principles explicated in such a design.

ii) **Impact Evaluation**

Impact evaluation attempts to evaluate the changes, both positive and negative, in terms of goals attained. The conditions prevailing before the implementation of the policy and after are reviewed in order to bring to the fore the impact of policy. Impact evaluation requires a design, which allows the investigator to demonstrate that the changes that occur are a function of the particular programme intervention and treatment.

iii) **Comprehensive Evaluation**

Comprehensive evaluation is the combination of process and impact evaluation as explained above. Such a combination would bring to light, What actually is the outcome? or How it has been made possible? What are the drawbacks? How improvements could be ushered in? It does not mean that exclusive use of either process or impact evaluation does not have any utility. However, from the point of public policy, it is comprehensive evaluation which is more useful.

17.4.2 Evaluation: Approaches

Policy evaluation is basically concerned with describing, judging, and explaining policies; their formulation, implementation, and outcomes. It deals with the questions, What has been done? Why and how things have been done? What has been achieved? What are the future prospects or options? In this process, analysts adopt different approaches. Some of the routine approaches to policy evaluation have been identified, such as, Front-end analysis; Evaluability assessment; Process evaluation; Effectiveness evaluation, and Evaluation Synthesis approach.

By front-end analysis we mean the kind of work, which is being undertaken before a decision is made to go ahead of framing policy on a particular issue. The need and magnitude of the problem, kind and number of persons or groups to be affected, amount of cost, cost-benefit feasibility, etc., are some of the important parameters, which are taken care of at the pre-policy formulation stage. It enables the formulators to frame policy which could deliver maximum goods with minimum. inputs. Under thk evaluability assessment approach, a comparison of the policy's assumptions is made with the stated goals and objectives of the policy and the points regarding rationality and utility of the assumptions are raised to ascertain that whether those could match the stated objectives of the policy. This approach serves to determine the feasibility and usefulness of performing full-scale evaluation of the programme's effectiveness. This approach lays the groundwork to answer accountability questions. The purpose of process evaluation approach is to describe and analyse retrospectively, the processes of implemented policies; strategies adopted; cost incurred; problems faced; and nature of interaction with the clients and other organisations concerned. It is meant to find out what is lacking where so far as the process part is concerned; and how, and where improvements could be made. The effectiveness evaluation approach, like process approach, is also retrospective. Its purpose is to find out how well or badly a policy is implemented, what have been the outcomes, what is the relationship of the outcomes with the effectiveness of implementation of a policy, and what changes are visible, etc. For determining the changes, the comparisons with the past conditions of the same group or conditions in experimental and control groups have to be made. Finally the Evaluation Synthesis Approach (ESA) is a highly versatile approach. It has the capability of serving all three kinds of evaluation purposes, that is, formulation, implementation, and accountability. The ESA reanalyses the results or findings from one or a number of evaluations for identifying what have been known about a policy. It has the capacity to address various evaluative questions, of course, depending upon the availability of evaluations made and data collected. It could be both quantitative as well as qualitative.

17.4.3 Methods of Evaluation

The various methods available for studying structures and changes of phenomena in societies may be utilised for policy evaluation also, with some adjustments depending upon the purpose and approach. In social sciences it has become common to distinguish broadly between two major approaches: quantitative and qualitative. In the words of Casley and Kumar (1988), the most obvious distinction between the two is that quantitative methods produce numerical data and qualitative methods produce information in words..

In evaluative studies, quantitative analysis may be sought to be used primarily for measuring effects and impacts. Quantitative methods in policy evaluation, most commonly, include benefit-cost analysis, cost effectiveness analysis, experimental designs and statistical surveys.

i) **Benefit-Cost Analysis**

Stokey and Zeckhauser claim that benefit-cost analysis is the principal analytical framework, which is used to evaluate public expenditure decisions. Basically benefit-cost analysis requires systematic enumeration of all benefits and all costs, tangible and intangible, readily quantifiable or difficult to measure, which will accrue if a particular project is adopted. With all this information at hand, the analyst should be able to subtract the total cost of each alternative from the total sum of its benefits and identify the net gain in each case.

In most cases, the costs may be fairly realistically quantified. Rossi and Freeman (1993) mention five means of monetising benefits:

- Direct measurement
- Market valuation
- Economic estimation (indirect quantification based on explicitly stated assumptions)
- Hypothetical questions (asking target people, how they consider basically non-monetary benefits to be worth in monetary terms)
- Observing political choices (transforming observed political prioritisation into some judged indicated monetary value).

In practice, however, except the first two, rest are not free from subjectivity.

ii) **Cost-Effectiveness Analysis**

Cost-effectiveness is considered to be a simplified version of benefit-cost analysis. It is a technique for evaluating various alternatives in terms of the degree to which they efficiently lead to the fulfillment of stated objectives. The alternative adjudged most preferable is the one which produces maximum effectiveness for a given level of cost or the minimum cost for a fixed level of effectiveness. This, method is not only useful for comparing proposed alternative policies, but also for evaluating the current or previous policies. In the opinion of Rossi and Freeman, the cost-effectiveness analysis, in its conventional form, is similar to the benefit-cost analysis except that monetising is required only of the costs, however, the benefits being expressed in direct outcome units.

iii) **Experimental Method**

Experimental methods are not uncommon in social research. The basis of evaluation is an 'ideal' laboratory-like situation in which some units in a population who received some service under the policy measures have been randomly selected, while others have not received it. In evaluating the performance of such policies and programmes, samples of different groups (who have received and who have not received) are selected for comparative analysis. Relevant variables of the groups are then studied before and after, and even during the programme period in order to find out the difference of impact. Subsequently, statistical methods are used for testing the data for significance 'levels. One or more control groups can be selected to test the impact of apolicy.

iv) **Statistical Surveys**

Survey method is quite common in social research. In policy evaluation sphere, surveys are quite useful. Information (data) is collected and analysed by applying statistical tools especially with the help of sampling techniques, questionnaires and interviews supported by observation method and secondary data. Suitable hypotheses may be developed after identifying appropriate variables. Groups from the population are selected on the basis of certain characteristics, such as, the level of education, income, size of landholding, age, sex, social backgrounds, etc. Subsequently, changes are sought relating to programme or policy interventions and association between degree of success of the policy/programme and different characteristics of the samples are tested statistically. A number of authors also distinguish between three types of studies of change in one population, that is, trend design, cohort design and panel design. Such designs arc used to study the changes from different angles over different time periods.

v) **Qualitative Methods**

In a number of cases/situations the information cannot be quantified (i.e. expressed in numerical terms) or cannot be quantified in any meaningful way for the purpose at hand. Moreover, numerical data usually have to be analysed in a context, which cannot be, or can only be partly, quantified; consequently, the data will have to be wholly or largely explained qualitatively. Broadly speaking, a qualitative approach is necessay in the following situations (Dale):

- When it is not possible to study statistically representative samples of beneficiaries,
- When changes are the result of complex processes, involving many interrelated factors.
- For analysing relevance, due to the value judgments involved.
- When studying the organisational issues (involved in policy implementation).

The above analyses of methods of evaluation clearly indicates that both quantitative and qualitative methods are equally important in the exercise of policy evaluation.

vi) Model **Building**

In order to effectively evaluate costs and benefits associated with any given policy—and to aid in the search for the alternatives to such policy-models are often called into play. In their crudest form, such models may beimply a series of tables or graphs systematically displaying and weighing the relevant data. Other models may involve the use of mathematical equations or computer simulations. The main purpose of models is to evaluate or gain insight into the value of a given policy or alternatives than merely applying judgment and experience.

17.5 EVALUATING AGENCIES

Another significant area of study in the field of policy evaluation is the role of various agencies involved in it. It is necessary to determine the agency, which is the most appropriate for policy evaluation. Sometimes, more than one agency is involved in the job of policy evaluation. Let us now, examine the role and appropriatehess of these agencies.

i) **Evaluation by Specialised Agencies**

Policy evaluation, as we know, is not a simple task. A policy at its various stages needs to be looked into by a specialised agency preferably by outside or independent experts. A major advantage of independent experts is that they do not have any vested interest in the given policy or the agency concerned. As Wildavsky puts it: "No matter how good is the internal analyses or the internal organisational arrangement, there is something unsatisfactory about allowing it to judge its own case." The specialised agencies may be hired for this purpose or the independent public agencies may be assigned the task. Certain research organisations, such as, the Centre for Policy Research, Programme Evaluation Organisation (PEO), and universities may fit into this category.

ii) **Evaluation** by **Internal Units**

Evaluation by internal agencies/units is a common practice in some countries. The main advantage of such an arrangement is the easy availability of information or data, Such internal agencies have the full basic knowledge about the nature and objectives of a given policy. Evaluation by internal agencies is preferred because it avoids clash with the policy-making agencies. In the sphere of policy analysis, research cells within the concerned Ministries or Departments may perform the task. Moreover, the implementing administrative agencies theinselves keep on collecting the data, monitoring the progress, and may also prepare periodic performance reports. However, internal evaluation suffers from certain shortcomings. Firstly, the administrative agencies may lack the skill and capability of investigation or research. Policy evaluation being a specialised task is required to be looked into by experts and not by routine administrators. Secondly, the element of bias is always there. As the adage goes, no one should be a Judge in his own case. In this context, how one can expect objective evaluation by those who are involved in the implementation of their own policies and programmes. Thirdly, the administrators always resist economic analysis and databased reports. Therefore, analysis, such as, cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness may not be carried out fairly. Finally, there are chances of distortion of information, concealment of critical data, window-dressing, etc. due to administrative compulsions or political pressures.

iii) **Evaluation** by **Legislative Committees**

A common practice in democratic countries is the involvement of legislative bodies in policy evaluation. Since the Legislature/Parliament are large bodies and overburdened with routine work, it is their smaller committees, which take up detailed investigative and evaluative work. In India, for instance, we have a number of such committees, viz., Public Accounts Committee; Committee on Public Undertakings; Committee on Women Welfare; Committee on the Welfare of SC/STs, etc.

iv) **Evaluation by Special Committees**

Appointment of certain commissions or committees for policy evaluation is a common practice by governments in many countries. They are usually appointed to conduct a thorough examination of certain policy measures. Such commissions/committees look into the existing policies, especially their working and impact; and identify the positive and negative sides, and also make a long list of recommendations towards policy corrections or for future policies. These commissions take the help of official inacliinery, experts, and public. They take a long period of time to submit the reports. Some of the well known commissions in the Indian context are: National Commission on Agriculture; Law Commission; Education Commission; Administrative Reforms Commission; . Agricultural Prices Commission, Commission on Welfare of Women and Children; National Health Commission; Mandal Commission; and so on.

17.6 PROBLEMS IN POLICY EVALUATION

Policy evaluation is comparatively a neglected area in the total policy process. It faces a number of problems, challenges and dilemmas. A number of authors, such as, Stuart Nagel, James Coleman, Guy Peters and Robert Glombiewski have identified some problems in policy evaluation. In the opinion of Peters (1988), the evaluation process right from the initial stage of goal specification to that of measurement of performance may appear to be simple policy, but in the public arena it is quite arduous. Several barriers stand in the way of those who try to produce such evaluations. These problems are briefly explained below.

i) **Goal Specification**

Evaluation is associated even with the initial process of goal identification. Policy instrument, such as, statutes are often drafted in ambiguous language and the goals are vaguely defined. Policy specifics are not spelt out; often they are grandiose statements of aspirations. Even, some policies are not provided adequate budgetary support. Diversion of funds or non-release of funds is also a recurring feature. Many a time, diversions are made to satisfy political or ulterior motives of those who can call the shots. Merton calls it a process of 'displacement of goals'.

Moreover, wherever the goals are clearly expressed, they may not be practical. A large number of statutory instruments carry a number of p ovisions, which are not practical. Equality, full-employment, poverty alleviation and many more remain at best political goals only, and intended to serve the purposes of propaganda and political mobilisation. Given this scenario, goal specification rarely exists, thereby making policy evaluation a futile exercise,

ii) **Measurement**

In the public sector, measuring results or output is difficult. One fundamental problem that limits the efficiency and effectiveness of government is the absence of any ready means of judging **the** value of what is being produced, say in the case of welfare, health or defence, easy yardsticks for evaluation are not available. There may be a number of parameters and new diseases, new social problems or new enemies may arise from time to time. Another problem in measurement, in government, is the problem of time span over which the benefits of many public programmes are delivered. Long-term goals in health', education, rural development, etc. relate to quality of life and enlightenment, which are elusive qualities to measure when an evaluation must be done quickly. In case of sustainability or durability, some measures, for example, produce results after they have been in existence for years, whereas others show immediate impacts. Here, again political compulsions creep in when the parties are short of time to wait for long-term results, thus, leading to manipulation and distortions. However, the factors associated with the characteristics of the population also cause problems in evaluation. For instance, among the poor sections of society, it is difficult to assess the impact of health policies because of their inherent problem of malnutrition and the unhygienic environment in which they live. Similarly in the measurement, problems of administrative organisation, skill and competence of the personnel also pose problems. Lastly, temptation to inflate or cook-up data tend to defeat the very purpose of objective measurement.

iii) **Targets**

Goal's fulfilment is related to the achievmeent of targets. In this context, it is important to know not only what you intend to do but also to whom you intend to do it. For example, programmes that have significant effects on the population as a whole may not have the desired effects on a target population. In a number of cases, the advantaged sections of society grab the programme benefits, though the benefits are in fact meant for the disadvantaged strata. In India, a number of schemes of rural development, women and child welfare, poverty alleviation and housing, besides subsidies, have not made much impact on the target groups, but the policy evaluation indicates the fulfilment of targets. Thus, programmes may create a false sense of succeds, although most of the time the creamy layer knocks off the benefits. Programmes that have stringent criteria for admission may select clients who actually need little help rather than those who have the greatest need. Thus, the "success" of such policies is misleading. With much of policy evaluation, defining the target population tends to be a political exercise and much less an exercise in rational policy analysis.

iv) **Efficiency and Effectiveness**

Much like the difficulty in measuring results, it is often difficult to assign costs to particular results, even if those results are measurable. For the same reason, similar difficulties may arise in measuring effectiveness. Much of the assessment of performance in government depends on the evaluation of procedural efficiency. In a technical sense, the latter is linked with the fulfilment of legal requirements besides expected procedures, such as, budgeting, accounting and audit compulsions. It is the 'efficiency', which is projected and measured rather than the services produced,

v) **Values and Evaluation**

There are also problems of values and perceptions among the policy evaluators, which make proper valuation of the outcomes of a programme difficult. This is especially true when the programme has significant unintended effects that must be weighed against the intended consequences. Moreover, value system of the analyst/evaluator may have a substantial influence over the final evaluation of outcomes. The organisations involved in evaluation may also have their own collective values to guide them in evaluating outcomes. Professionalism of a high order can enable objective evaluation. Besides above, the analysts also confront a number of other common problems.

vi) **Information and Data**

For any objective analysis there is a need of accurate, comprehensive, and comparable data. Infact, before beginning the process of evaluation it needs to be ascertained as to what type of data is required, and how it can be collected? Data collection is not a simple task, it requires a lot of time, skill, energy, and resources, which the evaluation agencies must possess. At times, it is not easy to extract accurate information, particularly when it is of qualitative nature. Also there may be problems due to non-availability of records or data in the desired formats, which pose constraints to policy evaluation.

vii) **Methodological Problems**

Besides problems in regard to availability and collection of data, there may be problems in regard to techniques and methods employed for evaluation. In this regard, capability of policy analysts or agencies involved in evaluation is very crucial. However, in the evaluation work, there is always a doubt in regard to the methodology employed and the accuracy of results.

viii) Problem of **Resources**

A common problem in government, particularly in the developing countries, is the shortage of resources–human, financial and infrastructural. While the scope for evaluation is on the increase there is no commensurate investment in the resource base for evaluation either within the government or within universities and research institutions in India.

ix) The **Optimising** Dilemma

Policy optimisation requires the adoption of apolicy that would optimise or maximise the expected policy goals under different conditions, constraints, and challenges rather than emphasising exclusively on prediction. Generally, evaluation reports talk about relationship between policies and goals. In fact, the actual need for a society is to list more of the prescriptive requirements than to place emphasis on predictive findings and relationship between policies and goals.

x) The Unforeseen Consequences **Dilemma**

During the evaluation process, the evaluators come through a number of unforeseen consequences, which they had never thought of. Normally, while dealing with such unforeseen consequences, the evaluator goes by the data and the methodology adopted regarding known consequences. This is likely to affect the final evaluation report to aconsiderable extent. In such cases, in the absence of contingency models, the evaluation report would not be able to reflect realities.

xi) **The** Equity Dilemma

It is related to the frequent conflict in policy evaluation between policy goals of equity and efficiency. It can have enough scope for subjective analysis and evaluation. Stuart Nagel says, " the important point is not the technical aspect of the approach taken to equity of benefits, equity of costs, and efficiency, but rather the conscious consideration of these criteria. Policy evaluators may not have an obligation to reach a solution, that is, both efficient and equitable; it may indeed be iinpossible to do so. They should, however, be obligated to discuss these issues explicitly in their policy evaluation."

xii) The Partisan **Dilemma**

As noted earlier, problems of a partisan approach creep in the process of evaluation. Evaluators, mostly government employees, many a times fall aprey to what their political masters want rather than going about their job of evaluation in an impartial manner. The elements of objectivity, commitment to public interest, and offering resistance to difficult political and other pressures are obtained in countries like India. The 'Yes, Minister' syndrome is the one that rules the roost.

Above we have noted a number of problems and dilemmas in policy evaluation. These may vaiy from country to country, depending upon a number of factors, such as, the nature of the political system, the party system, interest groups, media, citizenry, administrative capability, competence level of human resources, level of economic development and so on. An effective system of policy evaluation requires political will. Other requirements are: the capability and support of administrative agencies, involvement of universities, research organisations, provision of adequate resources to the evaluating agencies, training of evaluation personnel, use of standardised methodology, efficient information system, and access to communication technologies. Above all in order to minimise the problems in policy evaluation, and to make it an effective exercise proper coordination and sincere efforts are required at all levels.

17.7 CONCLUSION

Evidently policy evaluation is of immense significance in the total policy process. This Unit highlighted the fact that evaluation cannot be disassociated from policy formulation, implementation, and accountability. Policy evaluation should enable an objective assessment of the performance of a programme, and identify the need for a new policy to be framed in an optimal manner. This Unit dealt with the various types of approaches and methods of evaluation like methods of policy evaluation, ethical issues, problems in policy evaluation, and need for improvements in the evaluation process. In addition, role of various agencies in evaluation especially by specialised agencies, internal units, legislative committees, and special committees have been explained. Lastly, problems in evaluation, such as, goal specification, measurement, target achievement, fulfilment of criteria of efficiency and effectiveness, and the role of values of evaluators; problems of methodology; lack of adequate resources for evaluation; and the dilemmas of optimisation, equity and partisanship have also been described briefly.

17.8 KEY CONCEPTS

Appraisal	Critical evaluation of an activity of programmes normally before it is approved for implementation or funding.
Benefit-cost analysis :	Systematic enumeration, preferably in quantitative monetary terms, of all benefits and costs of a policy/programme/project.
Data	Facts, statistics and other forms of information that provide the raw material for analysis.
Effectiveness .	It refers to the extent to which desired outcomes or expected impacts are achieved.
Efficiency	It is the ratio of the benefits to the investments made in a programme/ project.
Monitoring	Current assessment of the progress of a project, including identification of constraints in obtaining the expected results.
Pareto optimality	An economic or political arrangement under a policy that makes one or several persons better off without worsening the position of others.
Quantification	The assignment of numerical values to variables so that they can be measured or compared by quantity.
Simulation :	Process of making things resemble something real through heuristic exercises or statistical computations.
Sustainability :	Continuation of the practices or work done or measures taken under a policy after its termination.

17.9 REFRENCES AND FURTHER READING

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17.10 ACTIVITIES

1) On the basis of any major policy of the top management of your organisation, discuss the role of evaluation agency in evaluating the policy. Critically evaluate the effectiveness of the agency.
2) Given the resources and assistance, if you are asked to evaluate the policies of the local government of your area what problems would you face? Explain.