GUIDANCE FOR EVALUATING PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION

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1 Introduction

The Public Legal Education Network (Plenet)[1] commissioned a PLE Evaluation Framework to promote robust evaluations of the impact of PLE interventions, so that over time we develop a better understanding of what works and why and to provide a sound basis for forward planning. This Guidance is intended to accompany the PLE Evaluation Framework.

The Framework includes a core set of evaluation goals, measures, questions and research methods for evaluating PLE which can be used in conjunction with this Guidance. The Framework also discusses some of the broad issues that need to be considered when evaluating PLE, the different target audiences in PLE, and the possible wider impacts of PLE that projects and programmes might think about capturing.

The focus of the PLE Evaluation Framework and this accompanying Guidance primarily reflect project or programme evaluations that assess and measure outputs, outcomes and impacts (this is called a 'managerialist' approach to evaluation). Other approaches to evaluation that Law for Life is interested to explore focus on the evaluation of practice (rather than the evaluation of particular projects or programmes), in which learners and educators can reflect on what is being done and the extent to which things are working well. Some of the issues and research methods are common to both. Whilst this Guidance does not specifically discuss the evaluation of practice we have provided some examples of these evaluation approaches in Section 5 of the Core Framework.

Section two provides some background to programme and project evaluation, and the examples of PLE project that we have reflected on. Section three looks at the difference between process and impact evaluation, and their relevance to programme improvement. Section Four considers how to plan an evaluation and some of challenges that are specific to PLE evaluation. Section Five looks at setting the aims and objectives for the evaluation in order to help the evaluator think more clearly about what they are trying to achieve, with some examples from PLE projects. Section Six explores specific performance indicators and provides some examples of indicators that can be considered in developing PLE projects. Section Seven looks at research ethics and the kinds of issues that have been addressed in PLE projects. Sections 8 through 10 offer some examples of data collection tools and methods, help with sample design and data analysis. Finally Sections Eleven and Twelve explore how to report on and disseminate your evaluation findings.

[1] The Public Legal Education Network was established by Advice Services Alliance in June 2007 with funding from the Ministry of Justice to take forward the recommendations of the PLEAS Task Force. In the summer of 2011 Plenet evolved into Law for Life – the Foundation for Public Legal Education.

2 What is project or programme evaluation?

Evaluation is the systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of information about projects, research programmes and policies. Evaluation research often examines the effectiveness and efficiency of a project or programme.

Evaluation is a methodological area that is closely related to, but distinguishable from more traditional social research. Evaluation utilizes many of the same methodologies used in traditional social research, but because evaluation takes place within a political and organizational context, it requires group skills, management ability, political dexterity, sensitivity to multiple stakeholders and other skills that social research in general does not rely on as much (Trochim, 2006).

This Guidance outlines the key areas of the evaluation process, giving an outline framework and links and references to more detailed material that will be valuable in performing legal capability evaluations. Where relevant, there are observations from evaluation reports specifically concerning Public Legal Education, including projects carried out in the UK and Canada.

Numerous websites and manuals are referred to in the text. A full list of all references can be found at the end of this document. We have drawn on existing published evaluations of PLE interventions, including:

- *Life and Law in Britain: A Guide for Young Asylum Seekers and Refugees* (Citizenship Foundation): Evaluation of 142-page guide to provide young 'newcomers' with cultural and legal norms in Britain. (UK)
- *Progress towards equality: reaching out to communities: Final Evaluation* (Gilfillian Partnership): An evaluation of the *Progress Towards Equality* report. Aim of the project was to improve capacity of individuals and communities to deal with discrimination, equal rights and human rights issues. (UK)
- *Active Young Citizens: Empowering Young people Through Public Legal Education* (Independent Academic Research Studies): An evaluation of a training programme to improve young people's ability to resolve daily law-related events. (UK)
- *Possession Prevention Project: Report on the work of the Possession Prevention Project April 2004-Paril 2007* (Southwark Law Centre): An evaluation of the *Possession Prevention Project* which aimed to reduce the number of possession orders and evictions in Southwark by increasing access to advice serves. (UK)

- *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework: Women's Legal Empowerment and Revitalisation of Legal Aid – Pilot Programmes* (Justice for the Poor): The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Justice for the Poor's pilot programmes aims to document the experience with implementing the baseline survey, assist with the implementation of the post-pilot survey and evaluation report, and to assist partners and other organizations who wish to monitor and evaluate their own legal empowerment programmes. (Asia)
- *Self-Help Centre for Self-Representing Litigants* (Malcolmson and Reid): The purpose of the project pilot was to design a self-help centre for unrepresented litigants that would facilitate access to justice by offering advice, information, and education about procedures in the Supreme Court of British Columbia. The report identifies core features of the service and outlines key issues for future consideration as to expansion and replication. (Canada)
- *Our Streets Evaluation Summary* (Streetlaw): *Save Our Streets* is an education programme for 13-17 year olds in the US charged with weapons offenses. The evaluation compared youth knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours before and after programme participation. (US).

3 Types of Evaluation

The focus of the PLE Framework is mainly on impact evaluation. “Impact evaluation assesses the changes that can be attributed to a particular intervention, such as a project, program or policy; (including) both the intended ones, as well as (ideally) the unintended ones” (World Bank Poverty Protection and Equity Group, 2011).

> An impact evaluation measures the programme's effects and the extent to which its goals were attained. Although evaluation designs may produce useful information about a programme's effectiveness, some may produce more useful information than others. For example, designs that track effects over extended time periods (time series designs) are generally superior to those that simply compare periods before and after intervention (pre-post designs); comparison group designs are superior to those that lack any basis for comparison; and designs that use true control groups (experimental designs) have the greatest potential for producing authoritative results.
>
> *Source: Office of Justice Programs*

The other type of evaluation also referred to in the Framework is a process evaluation. A process evaluation focuses on what services were provided to whom, and how. It aims to describe how the program was implemented. For example, “who was involved and what problems were experienced. A process evaluation is useful for monitoring program implementation; for identifying changes to make the program operate as planned; and, generally, for program improvement" (Gomby and Larson, 1992:71).

> A process evaluation documents and analyses the early development and actual implementation of the strategy or programme, assessing whether strategies were implemented as planned and whether expected output was actually produced.
>
> *Source: Office of Justice Programs*

4 Planning an evaluation

As the PLE Framework describes, there are a number of challenges to evaluating the impact of PLE that stem from the nature of PLE activities. PLE often makes up only one element of a project (and possibly a small element); the subjects covered by PLE may be very varied; the activities used to deliver PLE can be diverse; and the target audiences will differ greatly project-by-project.

When first thinking about designing an evaluation, it is important to ask whether or not a project or programme can be evaluated at all. Some interventions can be so complicated and diffuse that they have little chance to meeting the main requirements of evaluability: that the interventions and the target population are clear and identifiable, that the outcomes are clear, specific and measurable, and that an appropriate evaluation design can be implemented (HM Treasury, 2011).

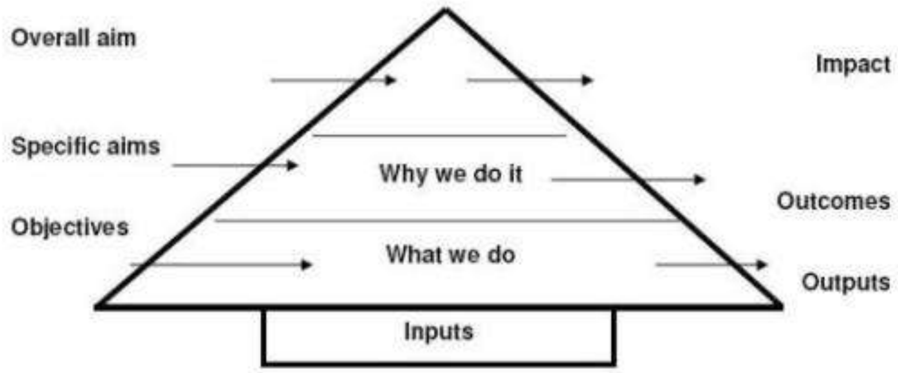
Another key factor when planning an evaluation regards the scale of the evaluation, which needs to be considered at the beginning of the process. The Big Lottery Fund's 'Understanding Self-Evaluation' (2010), states that the scale of the evaluation should be proportionate to the size of the project. The Gilfillian Partnership's (2010) evaluation of the 'Progress towards equality: reaching out to communities' project noted that some of the smaller local projects thought that the monitoring they were asked to do was too onerous for such a small project with limited resources.

The Big Lottery Fund allocates a fixed percentage of the money it distributes to each project for evaluation purposes. This is a good way to ensure the scale of the evaluation is appropriate for the project. It may be possible to consider building a partnership with a similar organisation that is evaluating their work to share ideas, processes, etc.

Time, budget and data constraints need to be identified. There is little point planning an elaborate, multi-faceted evaluation for a tiny project, and evaluation aims need to be realistic – both in terms of time/financial constraints, and the expertise that is available to complete the evaluation.

5 Setting evaluation aims and objectives

Engaging key stakeholders is vital when setting aims and objectives of evaluation. Specifying the time-scale, resources available and who will be involved is crucial at this stage (Evaluation Trust, 2002).



Source: Charities Evaluation Services, 2010

The overall aim is likely to be too broad a statement to allow the planning of the evaluation in detail, or to provide guidance on what might be monitored and evaluated. Specific aims – statements about different aspects of the main purpose – will allow the evaluator to think clearly about what they want to achieve.

5.1 Aims

Aims should show an understanding of the project that is being evaluated. In general, an evaluation seeks to answer several key questions:

- Was the strategy or programme (*intervention)* implemented as intended?
- What specific activities were implemented?
- Did these activities lead to the attainment of specific objectives?
- Were the programme's overall goals achieved?
- To what extent were successes or failures a result of factors other than the strategy?

Source: Office of Justice Programmes

5.2 Objectives

Objectives identify what the evaluation will do to meet its aims. Each aim will have one or more objective, and some objectives may relate to more than one aim. The objectives will specify the outputs of the evaluation.

The Big Lottery Fund's 'Understanding Self-Evaluation' (2010) provides some useful pointers that need to be considered when considering the aims and objectives of an evaluation:

- Does the evaluation have a clear aim?
- What questions will the evaluation answer?
- Is the scale of the evaluation proportionate to the size of the project?
- Who will be involved in managing and carrying out the evaluation?
- How will the findings from the evaluation be used?

5.3 Setting evaluation aims and objectives: Examples from PLE

Most evaluations of PLE initiatives that we reviewed realise the importance of setting out aims and objectives at the beginning of their evaluation report. The Citizenship Foundation's evaluation, 'Life and Law in Britain: A Guide for Young Asylum Seekers and Refugees' (2008) sets out its goals particularly well.

They write how the 'evaluation reports on (1) relevance of the publication in current climate (in the form of a 'thoughtpiece') and (2) investigates its impact on the lives of target groups: young asylum seekers and refugees and their support workers' ('Life and Law in Britain', 2008). The five areas that they aim to evaluate are: Use and usefulness (of project), knowledge and understanding, access and readability; coverage; design.

The Possession Prevention Project Report (2007) gives a more generalised view, that could apply to the evaluation of most PLE initiatives: '…(the evaluation report) provides an overview of the project, analysing the effectiveness and how the project can be best utilised and built upon in the future as a model of good practice.'

The 'British Colombia Supreme Court Self-Help Information Centre Final Evaluation Report' (2006) demonstrates aims and objectives that flow from the initial project aims, which would seem to be a good standard evaluation practice:

- To determine the degree to which the Centre assists users to access information, education and referrals services.
- To determine the effectiveness of the Centre service delivery model including the collaborative and consultative structure to which government and community partners contribute.
- To identify effective practices and/or any barriers in the implementation of the project that can inform future program implementation.
- To determine the degree to which the Centre, by increasing unrepresented litigant's access to justice, also facilities efficiencies in the court system.

6 Performance indicators

Performance indicators may inform how to structure an evaluation, or they may help to analyse performance during an evaluation. In either case, they are key parts of a successful evaluation.

To check how the organisation/project is performing, a set of performance indicators is needed. They are the criteria or 'clues' on which to base judgements about the progress and success of the project.

Performance indicators:

- let stakeholders know what they can expect from the organisation/project
- provide a focus for managers
- help to assess what is needed to monitor and evaluate
- help a project to judge its achievement and effectiveness
- help comparison between projects.

Who defines the performance indicators for the project is important, as different stakeholders will have different views about what counts as success. Involving them will provide a wider and richer perspective. It may be helpful to look at indicators that similar projects are using.

Funders may want to have performance indicators that are easily measurable or that link to their own strategies. This could mean measuring things that are not at the heart of the project. So discuss the key activities and intended benefits with funders early on.

Types of indicator

There are a number of different types of indicator. The most common are output and outcome indicators. These are often confused with impact indicators, but there is a difference.

Output indicators – these demonstrate the work the organisation or project does and show progress towards meeting objectives.

Outcome indicators – these demonstrate changes which take place as a result of the organisation's or project's work, and show progress towards meeting specific aims.

Impact indicators – these demonstrate longer-term change relating to the overall aim or mission of the organisation or project.

Source: Charities Evaluation Services, 2010

6.1 Performance indicators: Examples from PLE

The following performance indicators offer some examples of the kinds of impact that PLE projects might want to consider:

- Whether PLE helps improve access to justice (for example because participants decide to follow through issues as a result of PLE that they would not have done previously). In Canada, for example, an evaluation of the British Colombia Supreme Court self-help information centre examined the degree to which the centre increased unrepresented litigants' access to justice and in turn facilitated efficiencies in the court system.

- Whether legal knowledge/awareness increased? For example the Gilfillian Partnership's (2010) evaluation of the 'Progress towards equality: reaching out to communities' project asked how much participants knew about discrimination before and after the project, and whether their confidence in challenging discrimination had increased.
- Whether PLE helps to prevent law-related issues arising or escalating. In the US, for example, the Save Our Streets initiative resulted in lower re-arrest rates among young offenders who had received PLE than those who had not.
- Has the advocacy of citizen's rights been increased? For example, *Active Young Citizens: Empowering Young people Through Public Legal Education* (Independent Academic Research Studies) aimed to evaluate the extent to which young people were more able to assert their rights in the context of 'stop and search' police powers.
- Has access to help with legal matters been made easier? For example the Gilfillian Partnership's (2010) evaluation of the 'Progress towards equality: reaching out to communities' project evaluated the extent to which participants knew where they could seek legal advice about on discrimination issues before and after the project.
- Whether PLE supports integration and community cohesion? For example *Life and Law in Britain: A Guide for Young Asylum Seekers and Refugees* (Citizenship Foundation) sought to evaluate whether recipients had a better understanding of everyday life in Britain and the services that are available to them.

7 Research ethics

As in any type of research study, research ethics are a crucial consideration in PLE evaluation. It is particularly important given the diverse range of target audiences that PLE may reach out to, such as young people and potentially vulnerable adults. Issues of confidentiality, informed consent and sensitivity in conducting research must be considered at the evaluation planning stage and throughout the evaluation process.

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) outlines six key principles that need to be adhered to when conducting any type of research, including evaluation research:

- Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, quality and transparency.
- Research staff and participants must normally be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved.
- The confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and the anonymity of respondents must be respected.
- Research participants must take part voluntarily, free from any coercion.
- Harm to research participants must be avoided in all instances.
- The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit.

Source: ESRC Framework for Research Ethics

Consent is the central act in research ethics, as set out in the 1947 Nuremberg Code. The 1964 Helsinki Declaration stipulated that valid consent is properly informed and also freely given – without pressures such as coercion, threats or persuasion.

Principle Two states that:
‘Research subjects must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved.’

Principle Four states:
‘Research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from any coercion.’

Source: The Research Ethics Guidebook

The Economic and Social Research Council provide comprehensive guidelines on research ethics on their website ‘Building ethics into the research design.’

http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/Building-ethics-into-the-research-design-8

Also, there is a useful ethics checklist on the Government Social Research (GSR) pages:

http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/Assets/gsr_ethics_checklist_tcm6-7326.pdf

This checklist is structured under the five principles of the GSR guidance:

- Principle 1: Sound application and conduct of social research methods and
- appropriate dissemination and utilisation of the findings
- Principle 2: Participation based on valid informed consent
- Principle 3: Enabling participation
- Principle 4: Avoidance of personal harm
- Principle 5: Non-disclosure of identity and personal information

7.1 Research ethics: Examples from PLE

The PLE evaluation reports that we reviewed include very little information on research ethics. However, the notes for the evaluator for the 'Evaluation of IARS Young Justice Champions Training' project (2010) consider confidentiality and diversity issues. These notes are instructions for volunteers who are monitoring sessions of the Training Project. Although the notes are project-specific, they provide good indicators of ethical issues. Some of their pointers are reproduced below:

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is very important in all evaluations, and especially when you are actively engaged with individuals, who will quite rightly be concerned about anything being communicated to others about them.

Confidentiality means that you won't repeat anything said or describe anything you've seen throughout the day, except in very general terms in discussions about the issues IARS is concerned about (e.g. "Some people thought this, but others seemed to think that…") You never discuss (evaluation results) in such a way as to identify individuals.

The things you see and hear, and the notes you make, are confidential to the evaluation team.

The group discussion recordings are similarly confidential.

Eventually a report will be written and that will include general points emerging from the training. All points will be written in general terms and won't identify individuals at all.

If anyone asks you about the training the simplest thing is to say "I can't really talk about what went on – it's confidential"

Diversity

It's important to respect diversity and this should be observed in two particular ways – one fairly straightforward, the other less so.

The first is to make sure you don't use language or display attitudes or use body language disrespectful to others in any way. This should be pretty straightforward - as volunteers you aren't participating.

The second is to make sure you don't make assumptions about participants and allow this to affect the way you see them or the way you talk to them in the breaks.

Keep an open mind, and be aware if you're starting to feel either hostility or warmth towards specific participants that your aim is to stay neutral .

Source: Evaluation of IARS Young Justice Champions Training – General Guidance, 2010

8 Data collection methods and tools

As the PLE Framework notes, there are a wide range of research methods that can be used to evaluate a project or programme, for example questionnaires, interviews, live recordings of activities and participants' views, participant observation, ethnographic research, or the administration of tests, quizzes and scenarios. It is common for evaluations to include more than one type of data collection in order to meet its objectives, for example quantitative surveys combined with in-depth interviews. Some of the research methods used in PLE evaluations include:

- Quantitative surveys using self-completion questionnaires
- Depth Interviews (with participants, scheme managers, coordinators, stakeholders, etc).
- Focus groups
- Observation
- Self-completed monitoring forms (by the project participants themselves)

This section explores some of the commonly used data collection methods and tools. The following description provides a useful explanation of the different types of data that can be collected:

> ***Primary data*** is data collected, for example, through questionnaires or interviews designed specifically for the evaluation study.
>
> ***Secondary data*** is data collected by other organisations or researchers for their own purposes that can provide a useful source of information for the evaluation. This may be, for example, local population statistics, or a report on user experiences in other, similar projects.
>
> ***Quantitative data*** deals with numbers, asking questions such as: 'how much?', 'how many?' and 'how often?' Things are either measured or counted. It allows you to compare sets of numbers and look at their distribution. It is useful when you want accurate, precise data. You may be able to test whether there is a statistical relationship between an activity and some measured change.
>
> ***Qualitative data*** tells you about personal reactions, feelings, impressions and processes.
>
> *Source: Charities Evaluation Services, 2010*

The diversity of PLE interventions and audiences mean that qualitative research methods may be particularly valuable to understand the impacts of PLE on learners and also to help inform educators about what works in PLE delivery. The different forms of qualitative data that projects or programmes may collect are described below:

> Qualitative data is extremely varied in nature. It includes virtually any information that can be captured that is not numerical in nature. Here are some of the major categories or types:

In-Depth Interviews In-depth interviews include both individual interviews (e.g. one-on-one) as well as "group" interviews (e.g. focus groups). The data can be recorded in a wide variety of ways including audio recording, video recording or written notes. In depth interviews differ from direct observation primarily in the nature of the interaction. In interviews it is assumed that there is a questioner and one or more interviewees. The purpose of the interview is to probe the ideas of the interviewees about the phenomenon of interest.

Direct Observation Direct observation is meant very broadly here. It differs from interviewing in that the observer does not actively query the respondent. It can include everything from field research where one lives in another context or culture for a period of time to photographs that illustrate some aspect of the phenomenon. The data can be recorded in many of the same ways as interviews (audio, video) and through pictures, photos or drawings (e.g. those courtroom drawings of witnesses are a form of direct observation).

Written Documents Usually this refers to existing documents (as opposed to transcripts of interviews conducted for the research). It can include newspapers, magazines, books, websites, memos, transcripts of conversations, annual reports, and so on. Usually written documents are analyzed with some form of content analysis.

Source: Research Methods Knowledge Base

The Evaluation Trust gives some good general tips on data collection methods, including:

- Make sure all evaluators are clear on their responsibilities, and have received adequate briefing/training.
- Give feedback on results to evaluators to keep them involved and promote understanding of evaluation.
- Always pilot evaluation tools before use.
- Avoid leading questions.
- Allow for additional comments.
- Explain why you need the information.
- Assure people of confidentiality.
- If people are reluctant to give you profile information (e.g. age, details of income and employment, etc) try and find out why. They may, for example, be concerned that you might pass the information onto other agencies.
- If possible, allow a relationship of trust to develop with the user before asking for profile information.
- Never guess profile information - it should always be self-reported.
- Where possible allow people to describe their characteristics themselves rather than asking them to say which of your categories they fit into.

Source: Evaluation Trust, 2002

The website also stresses the importance of piloting:

> Before starting any data collection, it is a good investment of time to test the data-collecting instruments. For example, ask some project participants to fill in a questionnaire or carry out interviews with a small number of respondents. Then look at the results to see if the questions have been understood consistently by respondents and if you have captured the information you wanted.
>
> *Source: Charities Evaluation Services, 2010*

When deciding upon specific data collection methods to use in an evaluation (qualitative and/or quantitative), the following table (reproduced from a manual created by the International Fund for Agricultural Development), provides a good starting point:

Qualitative methods

METHOD	SHORT DESCRIPTION	REMARKS
Direct observations	Observations of sites, practices, living conditions, physical constructions according to a pre-agreed checklist (can be combined with rating).	Necessary in most evaluations; can be a source of unexpected findings. Generalization of findings can be an issue
Trained observer ratings	Systematic grading of physical outputs or organizational features based on preset parameters and grading scales.	Practical for interventions that are standardized. Requires careful preparation of rating guidelines.
Key informant individual interviews with semi-open questionnaires or checklists	Individual interviews on a number of selected topics according to a pre-agreed checklist. The majority of questions are open-ended and meant to stimulate discussion rather than elicit one-word or one-sentence responses.	Useful, inter alia, for discussing sensitive issues that would not normally be discussed in public. Generalization of findings can be an issue. Requires careful preparation of instruments.
Focus groups	Interaction of a relatively small group of people (normally 6-12) on a limited set of topics, facilitated by a moderator. Beneficiaries agree on a number of preferences, conclusions, beliefs, attitudes, etc.	Valuable for understanding interactions and areas of dis/agreement. Generalization of findings can be an issue.
Memory recall	Entails interviews with beneficiaries and other stakeholders, individually or in groups, who reconstruct their situation before the project.	Necessary generally in (many) evaluations, especially when baseline surveys are not available.
Case studies	In-depth assessment of a very limited number of observations.	The criteria for the selection of cases matters. Options include selecting best cases, worst cases or a mix of good-, medium- and low- performing cases.

Quantitative methods

METHOD	SHORT DESCRIPTION	REMARKS
Mini-surveys (typically samples 100-200 respondents, incl. project and control observations)	A sample of the programme population (and possibly of a control group) is extracted. Interviews are conducted by enumerators on the basis of a pre-written and pre-coded questionnaire. Entries are recorded on electronic support media and analysed using computer software on the basis of standard descriptive, inferential and econometric techniques.	The sampling procedure should try to capture the "true averages" in the population. This technique is feasible in the context of a project or country programme evaluation. Trained specialists are required for survey design planning and data analysis.
Larger surveys	As above.	Large samples allow for more refined analysis and are representative of more subcategories, but can be costly and time consuming to implement.

http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/process_methodology/doc/manual.pdf

Clearly, choosing the correct method for data collection is crucial to a good evaluation. The Research Methods Knowledge Database provides an accessible introduction to measurement ideas, along with further advice on choosing the appropriate method. These ideas include:

- Construct Validity
- Reliability
- Levels of Measurement
- Survey Research
- Scaling
- Qualitative Measures
- Unobtrusive Measures

Further information on these concepts, along with a more general guide to how to conduct a thorough evaluation can be found at:

http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/measure.php

Other references that are helpful when deciding upon data collection techniques are given by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the European Commission (EC):

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/WP2.pdf

Section three of this DWP report discusses quantitative surveys, depth interviews, and focus groups.

This European Commission guide to evaluation is an excellent guide to data collection techniques, as well as a guide to structuring the overall investigation.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evalsed/sourcebooks/method_techniques/index_en.htm

9 Sample design

When conducting any type of research, sample design is an important consideration for both quantitative and qualitative research projects. The varied nature of PLE interventions may create particular challenges for sample design when thinking about PLE evaluation. The 'Life and Law in Britain' project constructed its evaluation using several methods and highlights the practical difficulties of implementing a particular sample design:

Questionnaires were sent to 239 support workers and teachers, plus further 133 questionnaires asking different questions to those same organisations that had ordered further copies of the guide for young people. Questionnaires were also distributed to young people through support workers and teachers.

Focus groups Two focus groups were carried out, one with support workers and one with young asylum seekers. Five focus groups had originally been planned with young people, but this number was not practically possible.

Individual interviews Eight individual interviews were held with support workers and teachers by telephone or in person. Only four interviews were originally planned but more were conducted to make up for the smaller-than-anticipated number of focus groups.

The following sections discuss some of the general issues that should be considered when planning PLE evaluations.

9.1 Quantitative sample design

Sampling is the process of selecting units (e.g. people, organizations) from a population of interest so that by studying the sample we may fairly generalize our results back to the population from which they were chosen (http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampling.php).

The Research Methods Knowledge Base gives an excellent introduction to key issues concerning sampling design for quantitative surveys. Concepts that are explained include:

- External Validity
- Sampling Terminology
- Statistical Terms in Sampling
- Probability Sampling
- Non-probability Sampling

The American Journal of Evaluation paper on shoestring evaluation addresses different types of sample design including longitudinal surveys and comparison groups. Detailed consideration is also given to common problems that may face the evaluator when considering sample design, including:

- Lack of baseline data on the project population
- No control group
- Statistical problems in working with ex-post surveys (data collected some time after the intervention) using non-equivalent control groups
- Problems in collecting data on sensitive topics or from groups who are difficult to locate or to interview.

Comparison or Control Groups Whenever possible (in both qualitative and quantitative research) it is desirable to identify a comparison or control group. This may be a group of persons or an area in the community that does not receive the intervention but has characteristics similar to the group that does. Another possible comparison group is a similar, nearby community. The same pre- and post-intervention measurements should be made of the comparison group as of the group receiving the intervention.

Source: Office of Justice Programmes

9.2 Qualitative sample design

The sample design for qualitative research is generally purposive, that is, the sample is designed to include characteristics of interest (for example, low income homeowners, young people not in employment, education or training). Qualitative research is not intended to be representative of the general population, and so the findings from qualitative research cannot be generalised.

When considering qualitative sample design, the Research Methods Knowledge Base is an excellent resource. It succinctly considers the differences between qualitative and quantitative design, and discusses qualitative data, approaches, methods, and validity. The following link provides a gateway to this information: http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qual.php

10 Data analysis

How the data that is collected will be analysed is a crucial question that should be considered at the evaluation planning stage. It will be particularly important in situations where organisations plan to conduct evaluation without the input of professional evaluators. This may well be the case in the evaluation of PLE interventions.

The Gilfillian Partnership's (2010) evaluation of the 'Progress towards equality: reaching out to communities' project had an emphasis on formally agreed outputs, decided on by themselves and the stakeholders in the scheme. For instance - the number of hits and downloads on the website; number of new resources, such as reports, in print that were produced and disseminated; recruiting local advice agencies to deliver PLE work on equalities issues (all of which were achieved). These outputs were then analysed using cross-tabulations with socio-demographic data, along with questionnaires utilising satisfaction questions, which were presented graphically and in tables.

A good starting point when beginning the data analysis process is the Evaluation Trust website:

It is important to look at every piece of evidence, preferably with people from the key group of organisation's stakeholders, jointly analysing and making sense of information collected; and in light of the learning, the group making decisions (if necessary) about change or improvements that could be made to the project. Often you have to do the analysis on your own but really early on check out themes and conclusions with key informants- have I got this right? You may be met with anger and defensiveness but persist as this is part of the learning process. You may have got it wrong and have to be willing to make changes.

Further guidance on analysis, including questionnaires and surveys, can be found at:

www.evaluationtrust.org/system/files/GCF+Measuring+Outcomes+Toolkit+[1].pdf

The Charities Evaluation Services provides some good general advice on the interpretation of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as part of the analysis process:

Interpretation means looking beyond the data itself and asking what the results mean in relation to your evaluation questions. Be wary of assuming that there are links of cause and effect between your project activities and results. Involve other people in this level of interpretation and, where appropriate, acknowledge in your report the possibility of other interpretations. Remember to place data in context, bringing out the individual differences behind the responses.

It is not always easy to get a sense of the significance of different findings when you first look at the data – you may lose the most important point in studying and presenting the detail, or overemphasise a minor finding. So try to stand back from your findings and look at the broader picture before finalising your report.

10.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The Research Methods Knowledge Base has an excellent analysis section. Introductions to some of the concepts are below, and in much more detail on the website:

http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/analysis.php

- Conclusion Validity - **Conclusion validity is the degree to which conclusions we reach about relationships in our data are reasonable**
- Data Preparation – which involves checking or logging data in; checking the data for accuracy; entering the data into the computer; transforming the data; and developing and documenting a database structure that integrates the various measures.
- Descriptive Statistics - used to describe the basic features of the data in a study. They provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Together with simple graphics analysis, they form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data. With descriptive statistics you are simply describing what is, what the data shows.
- Inferential Statistics - investigate questions, models and hypotheses. In many cases, the conclusions from inferential statistics extend beyond the immediate data alone. For instance, we use inferential statistics to try to infer from the sample data what the population thinks.

10.2 Qualitative data analysis

When the raw data are numbers, data analysis is usually a matter of selecting and correctly implementing the appropriate statistical procedures. When the raw data are words however – fieldnotes, interview transcripts, documents and records – the process of data analysis is less easily codified. “Words are fatter than numbers, and usually have multiple meanings. This makes them harder to move around and work with. (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p.54).

There are several commercial software packages available to analyse qualitative data, including NUDIST and NVivo. This software generally involves coding qualitative data in some way, to identify patterns and trends. The National Centre for Social Research has developed the Framework software package for managing and analysing qualitative data. Given the cost of these packages, they would probably only be worth considering for large-scale evaluations or if evaluation was a core element of an organisation’s work.

11 Reporting evaluation findings

'How you present the report will have an important bearing on (its) credibility, so consider what the evaluation report will look like before you start putting together the findings. Think first about the purpose of the evaluation and its audiences' (Charities Evaluation Services).

The following box provides some examples of the main findings of different PLE evaluations:

Life and law in Britain: A guide for young asylum seekers and refugees. Citizenship Foundation

Key findings: (1) 'Thoughtpiece' on relevance of publication found it provides the only concrete and comprehensive tool to date which can serve the entire immigrant community. Publication linked to the agendas of key agencies. (2) The assessment of the publication was overwhelmingly positive, with recommendations made in relation to distribution and format of publication.

Save Our Streets Evaluation Summary

Youth who attended three or more program classes (after intervention) had re-arrest rates that were one-third lower than those not entering the program.

The Gilfillan Partnership Progress towards equality: reaching out to communities: Final Evaluation

The project has met all of its formally agreed targets and is on track to considerably exceed many of these. The local projects have been very successful in achieving the project's overall objective of increasing legal capability. They have had a clear impact on the people who participated in them and have generated many useful resources for future work in this area.

Some general guidelines on reporting are provided below.

Be very clear about your audience. What do they want/ need to know? What do you want to tell them? Either make it brief so people will read it - put information you do not want to lose into appendices - or have a good summary and use that as your main report with other materials as back up. Consider producing more than one report- internal and external, produced in the appropriate formats. Consider producing a very simple feedback summary for users and other participants. Present findings and recommendations clearly so people will understand it - beware of jargon! Use visuals- graphs, pie charts, bar charts, diagrams, stories in boxes, photos, cartoons....... Avoid criticism or praise of individuals where possible, and deal with sensitive or controversial issues with 'appropriate honesty and tact'.

Source: The Evaluation Trust, 2002

The Charities Evaluation Services have plentiful information on how to structure and write an evaluation report. Two of the recommendations, on drawing conclusions and making recommendations, are shown in the box below, while the rest is available on the website.

Conclusions do not just repeat the data, but should link clearly to the evidence presented. Avoid generalising from a particular finding and make clear in your report the difference between facts, respondents' views and the evaluator's interpretation. One approach to finalising the report is to organise discussion groups on the draft report. Think of this as your final stage of data gathering, as you may be given new insights and different interpretations. It is more likely that recommendations developed in this way will be acted on. Make the distinction between data and interpretation clear. If differences of opinion arise, make sure that the evidence is reported clearly in the report, and offer alternative explanations. **Recommendations** are based on the conclusions. An evaluation need not always lead to recommendations, and be wary of making recommendations if you do not have enough evidence. It is helpful to be clear about where you are able to propose a course of action and where further information or consideration may be necessary. Be clear about the most important recommendations and those that are less significant. If possible, give a timescale and say how the recommendations should be implemented. Recommendations should be specific, realistic and achievable.

Source: Charities Evaluation Services, 2010

The Research Methods Knowledge Base also has a good section on writing up the report. Key elements of the reporting are discussed, including formatting considerations, a full plan for the structure of the report, along with a sample report.

12 Disseminating evaluation findings

Several of the PLE evaluation reports we reviewed (UK and Canadian) are published online, and may well have been more widely disseminated than this. Clearly, it is important to think about who you want to read the evaluation report from the outset. Also, after producing a robust and comprehensive evaluation, it is important to consider how to disseminate the findings as widely as possible.

The Big Lottery Fund suggests numerous methods of dissemination, including:

- a summary of the research report for young people
- feedback events
- articles in project newsletters
- use of project website
- emailed correspondence
- text messaging
- articles in wider.

The Big Lottery Fund website is excellent for information on the dissemination of evaluations- including examples, checklists and ideas. Here are two links, the second of which is project specific but provides a useful checklist:

http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er_eval_working_in_partnership_sourcebook_uk.pdf

http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er_res_engaging_young_people_report.pdf

Further information on evaluation dissemination comes from the Charities Evaluation Services:

> **Once you have presented** your report, it may be tempting to file the evaluation away. This will be a waste of all the time, energy and resources spent on the evaluation and risks losing the goodwill of everyone involved. Importantly, it will also be a lost opportunity to improve what you do. Using your monitoring and evaluation findings is what makes the time and energy you have invested worthwhile. Your efforts will be wasted if you file your report away in a drawer. Instead, you will have a powerful tool to demonstrate the value of what you are doing, plus practical lessons to develop the project.
>
> Source: Charities Evaluation Services, 2010

13 References and further reading

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