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## UNIT 18 ASCERTAINING POLICY IMPACT

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### 18.0 LEARNING OUTCOME

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After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the meaning and purpose of policy impact;
- Discuss the types and major dimensions of policy impact;
- Explain the criteria, methods, and models to assess the impact; and
- Highlight various problems associated with policy impact.

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### 18.1 INTRODUCTION

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Policies need to be analysed on the basis of their outcomes. The question posed many years ago by Harold Lasswell: "Who gets what?" still holds good towards understanding the process and significance of public policy. In fact, in the policy sciences, policy evaluation and impact go together. Some researchers/authors even use the terms impact and evaluation interchangeably, while others do not distinguish much between the two. In the previous Unit, the process of policy evaluation was examined in detail. In the present Unit the focus of discussion is mainly on the significance and types of impact, and the means and methods of measuring the impact(s). Besides, the problems in assessing the impact(s) have also been discussed along with suggestions for improvements.

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### 18.2 POLICY IMPACT: SIGNIFICANCE AND TYPES

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In a model of 'policy delivery system' (Ira Sharkansky and Donald Meter), policy impact has been viewed as the significant component. The components taken in the model are: (i) an environment that stimulates government officials, and receives the products of their work; (ii) demands and resources that carry stimuli from the environment to public officials; (iii) a conversion process, including the formal structures and procedures that convert them into public policies; (iv) policies that represent the formal goals, intentions or statements of government officials; (v) the performance

of the policy as it is actually delivered to clients; and (vi) the impact of policies and performance on the environment, in terms of net social welfare, which is then transmitted back to the conversion process as the demands and resources at a later point in time. Thus, the impact being the final component in the process reflects a policy's rate of success, and its effects on the environment that result in new demands subsequently. The crucial feature of impact is the influence of earlier policies and performance on the demands and resources at a future point in time. A government's schemes concerning women welfare or health schemes for the poor either result in a certain level of beneficiary satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which provide the basis for their future demands.

### 18.2.1 Significance and Purposes of Impact Analysis

Policy impact is also understood in the sense of multi-dimensional effects or consequences of a policy as per Thomas Dye, on:

- some specific target situation or group;
- "spill over effects" on situations or groups other than the target;
- future as well as immediate conditions;
- a direct costs of relevant programmes; and
- indirect costs, including alternative programmes on which resources might have been spent.

From a broader point of view, to make certain that public policies and management of their associated programmes meet the needs of the society, it is necessary to analyse programmes to determine their consequences, that is, to measure the degree of their success in meeting the nation's goals. More specifically, it seems not only useful, but also necessary to know how things are going with respect to three critical levels in any administrative situation, which are mentioned below.

- Are policies and programmes generating expected outcomes?
- Are organisations accomplishing their mission and role with efficiency?
- Are specific individuals within any organisation performing well?

Given the lack of a market for many governmental goods and services, the significance of its impact or evaluation at these three levels seems relevant, as contrasted with a business organisation in a truly competitive situation (Golembiewski).

As indicated earlier, policy impact also contributes to the process of 'policy change'. This may be the direct result of evaluation, but more often it is the result of change in the environment or learning on the part of those administering the programme. Such impact on policy or policy change may sometimes result in policy termination or policy succession. There may not be any change simply due to failure to make decisions. Policy termination is also unlikely to take place. Once begun, programmes have a life of their own. They lead to the development organisations, hiring of personnel, and also bring up a clientele who come to depend on the programme for specific services. Dismissing the other two options leaves policy succession as the most probable outcome of an existing policy or programme. Policy succession may take the following forms:

#### ● Linear Successions

Linear successions involve the direct replacement of one programme, policy or organisation by another, or the simple change of location of an existing programme. For example, replacement of earlier rural employment programmes in India by Jawahar Rozgar Yojana or Swarnjayanti Yojana is an example of linear succession.

### **Consolidations**

Some successions involve placing several programmes that have existed independently into a single programme. Clubbing together of various industrial development and facilitation programmes under a single one, such as, the 'single widow scheme' or consolidation of certain rural development, rural employment or poverty alleviation programmes into a single programme such as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) are instances of consolidation.

#### ● **Splitting**

Sometimes programmes are split into two or more individual components. Splitting the programmes and organisations (departments), and carving out new ones is quite common due to the change in the environment, demands or pressures. The new departments in India, such as, the Department of Company Affairs, Department of Sports, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, etc. are the outcomes of splitting.

#### ● **Non-linear Successions**

Some policy and organisational successions are complex, and they involve elements of other kinds of successions. The complex changes, which were responsible for creating the Department of Disinvestment from the existing policies towards privatisation is an example of non-linear succession.

It can be inferred on the basis of the above discussion that the significance of impact analysis is enormous. In fact, impact is a means to adopt future policies in the light of the outcomes of past policies. It is an admitted fact that there is always scope for improvements in the system and its policies because we are in a dynamic state. The responsibility of the government does not come to an end merely by formulating and implementing the policy. It is all the more obligatory on the part of government to make sure that the policy outputs have a positive policy outcome. Besides, whatever has been achieved through a policy could be made the starting point for further additions to the policy. What has been achieved could be ascertained through the impact of the policy concerned.

## **18.2.2 Types or Dimensions of Impact**

As noted earlier, a policy evaluation may bring out number of outcomes of various kinds. There may be various types of implications of the current policy. It may have impact on various sections of society, administrative organisations or on future policies. Thus, it is not out of place to examine various dimensions of policy impact.

#### ● **Direct Impact**

In this situation, the policy clearly focuses on the target group or situation for which the policy is formulated, and the benefits or advantages that the policy aims at granting to the target group. Two such schemes are the Bharat Nirman scheme and the Rural Employment Guarantee scheme. The latter proposes to guarantee employment to poor people in rural areas within a 5 km radius, for a minimum of 100 days in a year, failing which the government would pay unemployment allowance to people unable to find work.

These schemes would need to be evaluated on the basis of reach and extent, and the actual impact on rural development and poverty alleviation in the rural areas. It could be assessed on the following counts:

- Practicability/feasibility in terms of resources.
- Communication regarding the same to the people about the scheme to enable their access to resources.

- Role of the Civil Society and the Panchayati Raj Institutions regarding the same and the synergy affected between them and the official bureaucracy.
- Responsiveness on the part of the bureaucracy in terms of commitment to the policy and willingness to work in a cooperative mode in relation to elected representatives and community groups.
- Quality of service delivery of the public administration system, in terms of facilitating access of the common citizens to institutions engaged in service delivery.
- Possible public-private partnership, and its impact on tangible results.
- Improvement in food and nutrition status of the people; increase in food production; improved water supply; and infrastructure development, both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

#### ● Indirect Impact

In a number of cases, we cannot expect direct impact of the policies on the target group or society. The desired impact may not soon be visible and many a times the actual impact is indirect. There may be unintended consequences that could not be foreseen at the formulation stage. It is always a complex task to measure such impacts. In a number of cases, when a policy is designed for a specific target group, it may influence others in the society, negatively or positively. For instance, a number of rural development programmes in India, directed towards uplifting the poor or weaker sections, have influenced or benefited the upper strata more than the target groups. Policy of removing fertilizer subsidy or industrial subsidy not only affects the farmers and the industrialists, but also the price-index and manufacturing that affect a sizeable number of people who are otherwise not covered by the policy. The policy especially to increase the railway freight on the goods transported through rail affects not only the producer or the buyer but also a number of consumers. Thus, such a policy has an indirect impact, which at times is more potent than the direct impact. Currently, much emphasis is being put on environment protection and disaster mitigation. However, business might just try to pass on the costs incurred in this sphere to the consumers. This is an instance of unintended consequences. The same may be true in relation to certain health policies or welfare measures, which may indirectly influence the employment pattern.

#### a Positive and Negative Impact

- Policies or programmes are generally initiated with a focus on certain positive objectives and outcomes. Policies once put into effect through legislative measures, and translated into programmes, schemes, etc. are likely to achieve positive results. However, there may be negative impacts as well on beneficiary groups or others. Sometimes, negative impacts on some people may have been anticipated at the planning stage itself and specified in the policy documents, with or without counteracting measures. In other cases, they may have been entirely unforeseen. They may, then, be more difficult to trace for evaluators. Information technology might make manufacturing processes more capital intensive, which might generate frictional/structural unemployment pressures in the economy. Certain subsidies for one section of society may create problems for competitors or may even cause heartburning and conflicts among some segments of non-beneficiaries:

#### a Immediate and Futuristic Impacts

For the government, there are different priorities at any given point of time. While some problems may be of immediate nature, others may be of long-run. Policies directed to raise the standard of some food products or the policies directed to raise certain taxes could have immediate impact. While policies having long-term objectives may not show immediate results. It is difficult to measure the impact of these policies immediately. The policy of the government to involve the private

sector in development or the policy of liberalisation would show its results after a good amount of time. Furthermore, it would be having both direct and indirect impact in positive and negative terms. Certain policies have both immediate as well as futuristic impact, the immunisation of children could be one illustration and the curbing of anti-national activities, another. For instance, disaster management policies would have both immediate and futuristic impact. In addition, certain subsidy programmes and social security measures may have immediate as well as long-term impacts.

### ● Impacts in terms of Benefit-Cost Relation

The impact of policy measures under any policy would depend, to a larger extent, on the financial, physical, human and infra-structural resources. Ascertaining the impact of policies in terms of these resources is also significant. In the developing countries, where resource crunch is a major problem, policy makers have to be seriously concerned about the costs involved and the benefits obtained. "A stitch in time saves nine"; however, policies and programmes with relatively low costs (expenditures) with substantive short-term benefits are generally opted for, whereas the high cost programmes are generally avoided despite the likelihood of high benefits. In order to ascertain the impact of policies in relation to the costs, all types of direct and indirect costs, involving tangible and intangible outcomes, or resources should be taken into consideration. The direct costs are relatively easy to measure whereas it is a complex task to assess the indirect or hidden costs. The amount of resources earmarked for agriculture or for industries could be made a base for knowing the benefits in the areas of agriculture and industries. The indirect benefits, which the family of an unemployed youth gets from the financial assistance given to him for starting an independent venture, are difficult to ascertain in quantitative terms. These have to be ascertained in qualitative terms since employment leads to intangible benefits, such as, rise in social status, self-confidence, etc.

In the context of benefit-cost relation of policy and its impacts, Dror opines that optimal public policy must specify and evaluate its resources just as it does its problems, but in terms of both these problems and other resources consuming activity, and in terms of their potential-uses for making and executing policies and for other activities. Optimal meta-policy-making must systematically and periodically scan present and future resources and problems; estimate the potential pay-off of resources by using both knowledge and intuition; explicitly evaluate the demand and supply for each resource; and specify needs for additional resources and further development of new resources. The resources used for any policy, whether in terms of money, manpower or infrastructural or other facilities, should be quantified in monetary terms. The benefit out of the resources utilised should, in any case, be not less than the resources put to use. If it is not so, then the policy does not have a positive impact. While attempting to know the impact of the policy vis-a-vis the resources used, efforts ought to be made to find out which, where, and how a particular given resource used has not provided the desired result or was used more than required.

Another dimension of the policy impact includes its symbolic and comprehensive effects on the society or the beneficiaries. In this context, it should be borne in mind that individuals, groups and societies frequently judge public policy in terms of good intentions rather than its tangible accomplishments. The popularity and public appraisal of a programme may be unrelated to the impact of that programme in terms of desired results. The implication is that some populist programmes may have little positive impact. In this regard, it is to be noted that systematic policy analysis mainly concentrates on what governments do, why they do it, and what difference it makes.

The impact of a policy can also be classified in terms of political, economic, social, and technical dimensions. As noted earlier, the impact can be on the economy, larger society, certain groups, political parties or it can be on certain administrative organisations involved, and certain other

programmes or schemes. Impact may be limited to certain specific target groups or locations or it can be on larger society.

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### 18.3 MEASURING/ASSESSING THE IMPACT

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Government or policy agencies are presumed to be keen in seeking favourable outcomes and impact from their policies. The question is: Does a specific public policy produce what is intended, and with what unexpected consequences? This may appear to be a simple question. But such questions are in reality highly complex, in terms of methods necessary for more or less conclusive analysis as well as in terms of the tendency for every effect to be related to ever-widening ripples of effects (Golembiewski).

An important point for consideration is the reliability or quality of impact evaluation. An 'adequate' impact analysis should, 'at minimum', do the following:

- Provide an adequate description of the programme or techniques whose impact is being tested.
- Provide clear assurance that the programme or techniques can be learned and applied by others also.
- Divide the study population into groups on a random basis, so as to wash out as many confounding variables as possible.
- Provide 'before' and 'after' measures of the behaviour, which were targeted for change.
- Establish definitions of 'success' or 'failure' that provide valid standards for assessing the outcomes of the study group under impact assessment.

In the previous Unit on policy evaluation, we discussed the methods and techniques of evaluation.

Grant and Gallagher list five approaches, while point out that they are not mutually exclusive, and most analysts call for a mixed strategy, drawing together elements of each to meet the particular problem under consideration. These approaches are:

- The experimental or quasi-experimental approach, which attempts to quantify success in achieving initial policy objectives, based on some form of 'before' and 'after' study of those involved in the experiment in comparison with a control group.
- The purely comparative study of success in achieving policy objectives using quantitative measures and based on a comparison between those affected by the policy or programme and those who have not been involved.
- A social indicator approach based on the regular collection of quantitative indices, which demonstrate the extent of success in achieving policy objectives over time.
- A process evaluation approach is concerned with recording and interpreting policies and programmes as they unfold, and employing a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data.
- Cost-benefit analysis and similar less comprehensive approaches (e.g. cost effectiveness, cost-minimisation), which involve the use of economic concepts to identify and measure the costs and benefits of policies and programmes.

Other than the methods of measuring impact as mentioned above and those described in the preceding units, such as, experimental designs, quasi-experimental designs, benefit-cost analysis, statistical designs without control groups, and cost-effectiveness analysis, a few more are discussed in detail in the following pages.

### Social Audits

In a social audit (James Coleman), resource inputs initiated by policy are traced from the point at which the intended recipients of those resources experience them. The assumption is that those resources, which (as experienced) are related to outcomes, rather than the resources as disbursed. There are two possible causes of the ineffectiveness of resources: i) the resources as experienced may be ineffective in bringing out any change; or ii) the resources as disbursed never reach the intended recipient and are instead lost somewhere on the path between the point of initial disbursement and the point of experience by the ultimate recipient. An impact research, which is designed to trace such resource loss, is a kind of social audit. Just as with a financial audit, the flows of resources are examined to discover the path that resources take, and the possible loss of these resources through diversion. However, in such kind of study there is a problem of effective methodology and other tools to trace the reality.

### Comparing with Standards

Another method in evaluating the impacts is by fixing the standards, and comparing the findings with these standards. Dror lists seven main types of standards to this effect:

- How does the achieved quality compare with that in the past? For instance, how good was school education in 2006 compared with that in 2005?
- How does the achieved quality compare with that of similar institutions? How does the quality of a primary school in one city compare with that of a primary school in another city?
- Does the achieved quality meet the various demands of the population? Are parents generally satisfied with school x? Are the pupils in general satisfied with school y?
- Does the achieved quality meet accepted professional standard? How is school x rated by the local branch of the National Education Association, or by the school of education of the local University?
- Is the achieved quality high enough to assure survival? Does it meet minimum standards? Is school x in danger of parents refusing to let their children attend it or of the superintendent demanding radical changes in its staff?
- Is the achieved quality as high as the quality planned for? Are there as many pupils as the authorities had planned for?
- Is the achieved quality as good as it could be according to an optimal model?

### Administrative Reports

Every administrative agency, assigned the task of implementation, is expected to submit an annual report regarding the work done by it. The impact of the policy is assessed from this report. There is every possibility that the report submitted is not objective and attempts are made by the implementer concerned to highlight some insignificant facts and hide some significant information, which goes against her/his work performance. Viewed from a positive side, such a report could be made the base for ascertaining more information and data for assessing the impact of the policy.

### Ascertaining Impact through Grievances and Complaints

A traditional and simple method to ascertain policy impact is through citizen complaints or responses. In a number of social programmes, such as, welfare schemes, social security measures, industry-related programmes, etc. the details of schemes and benefits are published or communicated to the beneficiaries. The implementing agencies are expected to follow the procedures and rules as

propagated by the authorities. In case of any kind of diversions by the administrative agencies, the prospective beneficiaries or clients may complain to the appropriate authorities or they may air their grievances through the press or other media. Though somewhat crude, this method is simpler and handy to get some feedback. If the number of complaints or grievances are negligible it would indicate the positive impact or good work of the implementing agencies. However, the method is not free from weaknesses. A large number of people may not complain or air their grievances due to a number of reasons. Moreover, a number of matters sometimes go unreported or unnoticed. Also, there is no system of keeping proper record of complaints and grievances. Many a time, the party in power may label the resentment as being politically motivated. In case the leaders or policy makers are sincere, a proper record of such complaints may be maintained and prompt action should be taken and conveyed to the complainant by the administrative agencies. Prompt redresses of citizen grievances may also help in ascertaining the policy impact to some extent.

### **Case-Study Method**

In impact evaluation, the in-depth case study method is well suited for community-based research. It is particularly useful for studying policy impacts on communities or groups among community inhabitants and also for providing an adequate assessment of the conditions for success. However, the case study method has the drawbacks of being time-consuming and the results can be generalised to a limited extent only.

### **Surveys based on Questionnaire and Interview Schedule**

These are common tools in any social research, and are used to collect quantitative as well as qualitative information. These are flexible in nature and are also used in combination with other research tools, such as, discussions, case studies, observations, etc. An advantage of this method is that it is relatively time saving and cost-effective; and computers, enabling greater precision and accuracy, if properly planned, can process most of the data,

### **Rapid Assessment**

This is also sometimes called 'rapid appraisals'. As the term indicates, this is a quick study. It is commonly undertaken by a number of persons, each of whom may have a different professional background, and with responsibility for looking into specific issues. Broader judgments and conclusions are then arrived at through communication between team members. The techniques associated with this method are interactional, such as, direct observation, informal communication with key informants, and group discussions. whereas the method is quick and relatively simple, it has the weakness of being less representative and at times superficial (Dale).

### **Participatory Assessment**

This is a relatively newer method of assessing the impacts. This has lately come to be used as a common denominator of an array of techniques by which professionals and non-professionals may jointly analyse, plan, and evaluate (Dale). Beneficiaries and related persons are associated with the evaluation process. Experiences, views and suggestions are shared. It also works as a learning process for everybody, as each group copes with the constrictions posed by others. Participatory assessment has not been used much as a key method in impact evaluation. However, it can be a beneficial exercise for analysing organisational or programme performance.

### **Cost-Benefit and other Analytical Methods**

A brief introduction to cost-benefit analysis has already been made in the previous Unit. The main purpose of cost-benefit analysis is to develop the total impact estimates of proposed investments.

It is also useful in estimating the impact of existing programmes and comparing them with that of the proposed programmes, and ranking their effectiveness. Cost-benefit analysis is applied at three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary costs and benefits are resource flows, which occur out of the interaction of the operating costs and operating revenues. The operating revenue quantifies the cash flows, which will actually occur on account of the pricing of sale of goods and services provided by the programme. Secondary costs and benefits are the quantifiable resource flows, which fall to the share of entities other than the implementing agency. These may include: householders, homogenous groups, the community or the national exchequer. Thus, a programme or project may have wider impacts than intended. Tertiary costs and benefits are effects, which in ordinary course of events are non-quantifiable or which cannot be priced. P.K. Matto adds that if primary, secondary and tertiary effects are identified in detail, it is possible to develop fairly comprehensive total profiles of programmes/projects and evaluate their impact on the economy as a whole.

Associated with the cost-benefit analysis are the concepts of 'Pareto Optimality' and 'Pareto Improvement Criterion'. It is argued by a number of authors that cost-benefit analysis should be linked to Pareto criterion. The quantitative outcomes of cost-benefit calculations show whether the gains exceed the total costs or not. Pareto optimality ensures that when some are made better off, none shall be made worse off, whereas the potential Pareto improvement is a progression towards Pareto optimality, which means that there is still some scope towards achieving a Pareto-optimal condition (Samuelson and Nordhaus).

The process of selection of policies or programmes or projects cannot be fruitfully undertaken on the basis of efficiency criterion only. The UNIDO guidelines (1972) hint that cost-benefit analysis, and national analysis must focus on all factors, which affect national welfare and should not be confined to economic aspects only.

The measure of performance or impact in terms of cost-benefit calculated now should also take into account the future costs and benefits. Implementation of certain policies gives rise to a certain pattern of social income over the years. The future gains less the disadvantages (say consumption by particular unintended groups) may provide the idea of definite value to the society. The exponents of cost-benefit analysis almost unanimously advocate the use 'shadow prices' for determining the money equivalent of project/programme inputs and outputs. Shadow prices are the expert estimates of what prices should be like rather than what they actually are (P.K. Matto).

Another analytical approach to cost-benefit analysis is in regard to 'aggregation of impacts', which has two aspects:

- Aggregation of costs and benefits accruing to different parties; and
- Aggregation of costs and benefits accruing to the same party over a period of time.

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## **18.4. POLICY IMPACT: PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS**

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A positive policy impact is the most significant rather than the ultimate aim of the total policy process. However, it is not free from problems and limitations, particularly the assessment or evaluation of impact. Some problems relating to policy evaluation have been discussed in the previous Unit, the same may be relevant here. A number of scholars/policy scientists have traced the problems relating to policy impact and its assessment. Prominent among them are Dror, Wholey, Golembiewski, Logan, Nagel, Coleman, Poland, Dolbear, Cambel, Gibsen and Prather, etc. The specific problems pointed out by them are listed here:

- Impact studies or impact analyses are the most neglected area on the part of those who are involved in the policy process as also by the academicians. As Poland states, the study of

impact and evaluation in public administration has been seriously neglected. It suffers not only from the lack of interest and initiative, but also from deficiencies on the methodological front.

- While doing impact analysis and fixing of standards, policy makers tend to rely on comparisons with the past. Dror opines that comparison with the past, in many respects, is misleading because it does not provide any 'zero point' for reliable conclusion. By comparing, it cannot be ascertained whether a particular performance of this year is actually 'better' or 'less bad'. These two conclusions are logically identical, but they have totally different implications as to what can and must be improved in the evaluation process, and as to whether members of the organisation are to feel self-satisfied or inclined to introduce change. "Even when achievements are higher than in the past, they often lag increasingly behind what is possible, needed, and demanded, and they should, therefore, often be evaluated as worse" (Dror).
- Impact evaluation often suffers because of the probable conflict between the two grossly defined roles, that is, of evaluator and administrator. If the evaluator is objective, he would assume a challenging skeptical attitude towards any findings, however, the administrator of a programme is often put in a position of trying rather desperately to come up with positive findings. Administrators have to work within certain compulsions: they depend upon funding by other agencies and have to justify their actions and even project to be 'successful'.
- Impact evaluators in the government generally lack research capabilities. Ambiguity, lack of appropriate bases for comparison, and lack of concrete evidence increase the administrator's control over assessments, or at least to minimise the criticism in case of failure.
- Public policies are often initiated in response to a demand, especially by some potent interest group to do something fast, even when the consequences of that specific 'something' may be obscure. In such situations, those who are managing the scene are not interested or cannot do much but let the things move on. In other words, in such 'at- sea' conditions, the captain of the ship has the only goal to stay afloat so that it might later be possible to make expeditious progress towards the intended (or nearby) destination (Golembiewski). In such administrative situations, even the most capable administrators are puzzled about what to do and how. In such contexts, impact evaluation has a low priority.
- Besides the problems of methodology, models, and evaluators in impact studies; there is a problem of poor feedback and non-utilisation of impact evaluation data. As such, the impact of evaluative research on programme or policy decisions has been less than substantial. Impact studies/research is meant for immediate and direct use in improving the policies/programmes. Yet the experience in various countries suggests that due to non-utilisation or under-utilisation of evaluative data impact studies have not exerted significant influence on policy decisions. The reasons for the non-implementation of the results of such studies are numerous, and only some of them concern the personal relationships of the evaluators. Others are to do with methodology and measurement, the quality of investigation, and the organisational and political constraints.
- These are a few more related problems in this regard. The non-utilisation of impact results is also attributed to change of priorities in due course of time. By the time results of impact studies are prepared, a lot of time is already gone (may be, years), and by that time new problems crop up before the policy makers. Therefore, most of such reports face the neglect of decision makers. Moreover, there is a general problem of resource crunch in government agencies. This acts as a barrier in the way of research and investigations and also towards making any changes or adjustments in the on-going programmes.
- Finally, a major problem in government is lack of reliance on non-governmental research institutes, universities or other agencies. The institutes/universities too are not keen to undertake.

evaluative studies, which could facilitate the impact measurement task. The media is also not bringing out factual position other than sensationalising some of the issues. Citizens too do not cooperate much with government or research agencies in revealing their true feelings and opinions.

Robert Golembiewski has compiled a few other limitations that may crop up in the way of estimating policy impact, as stated below:

- The major objectives of a programme may not be defined precisely or they might be conflicting or even contradictory.
- Due to their complexity, the principal outputs of a programme may not permit even gross estimation, let alone 'precise measurement'.
- a Difficulties and limitations towards identifying indirect inputs and social costs involved.
- Difficulty towards comparing alternative combinations of inputs and outputs.
- It may be practically difficult and politically impossible to really compare programmes for alternative uses of the same resources.

In order to have better impact studies and to expect better impact of the same on the policies and programmes, the basic requirement is political will and the positive attitude of the administrative authorities. A right kind of attitude with sincere efforts, appropriate skill and techniques, with which the implementing agencies can bring out a realistic position of policy impact. Adequate resources should also be available for this purpose. In case (which is most likely) the government agencies are not willing or capable to undertake impact studies. In such a situation, non-governmental agencies, universities, and research institutes should be encouraged and associated to study the impact. It would be better that the developing countries also establish specific policy evaluation institutions on the pattern of various developed countries. Standardised format, criterion and methodology to be employed for impact evaluation should be worked out, and should be made available to those involved in evaluation. In this regard, training of government officials involved in the process may also prove helpful. Non-conventional techniques, such as, rapid assessment method and participatory research also need to be encouraged, besides relying more on reliable primary data.

The problems of poor feedback and non-use of evaluative data are equally significant to be tackled seriously. This calls for more motivational efforts and other measures. To this effect a close relationship between the evaluation researcher and a clearly identified customer(s) of evaluation studies, plus sensitivity to the impact on others in the organisation is required, if research results are to be acted upon. For this, the research or evaluation agency needs to ensure that the findings of evaluation/impact appear meaningful to all concerned, especially the research customers.

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## 18.5 CONCLUSION

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Public policies are initiated with definite aims and objectives. Policies, when put to effect, have certain impacts. To assess the impact, we depend primarily upon the implementer's or official reports, which are supplemented by surveys, social audits, rapid assessment, cost-efficiency, and effectiveness analysis. The Unit has also focused on various problems associated with policy impact studies, and suggestions to further improve the impact analysis and feedback.

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## 18.6 KEY CONCEPTS

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**Conversion Process** : The process of converting demands as per resources in public policies.

- Cost-Benefit** : The evaluation of anticipated expenditures needed to accomplish given objectives in relation to the value of expected gains.
- Data** : The facts, statistics and other forms of information collected in a scientific manner.
- Effectiveness** : Capability towards achieving the desired objectives..
- Pareto Optimality** : Given a set of alternative allocations and a set of individuals, a movement from one alternative allocation to another that can make at least one individual better off, without making any other individual worse off is called a Pareto optimality. The term is named after Vilfredo Pareto, an Italian economist who used the concept in his studies of economic efficiency and income distribution.
- Participatory Assessment** : Professional evaluators and beneficiaries jointly evaluate the impact of a programme. It is also an interactive learning process in which the experiences, opinions; and suggestions are exchanged.
- Spillover effect** : Other implications or indirect impact, which is not primarily intended.

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## 18.8 ACTIVITIES

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- 1) Identify any one major policy of the local authority of your area (panchayat, municipality etc.) and try to ascertain the impact of the same.
- 2) List out the major implications of any major policy (you are aware of) of any state or the central government. Try to assess its immediate and future impact, positive or negative impact, and direct or spillover impact.
- 3) How do you find out whether a specific policy or programme produces what is intended? Discuss the problems and limitations of impact assessment and offer your suggestions for further improvement.