

UNIT 1 | Section A | 1.1.5 Evaluation is a Fashion...

Evaluation is a Fashion... And We Can All Do It! Really?

Nowadays, we can certainly say that evaluation is hip! Everybody wants to be an evaluator. Just take a look at the news and you will find journalists evaluating the life of royal families or surveys evaluating the faithfulness of your husband or wife! From this perspective, evaluation ultimately simply means that someone is assessing something by applying certain criteria in some way (cf. Kromrey 2001: 106).

So we all are evaluators, and we all have our view on things—and we may continue discussing those views until our dying days. If we consider evaluations a reflection of our own personal views, we will never find an **intersubjectively** verifiable method of producing **uniform findings**. And we will never be able to help decision-makers arrive at rational decisions.

Yes, opinions are important, but evaluation should be more than mere opinion! It should be more trustworthy, less subjective, and more convincing—or to sum it up:

It should be more scientific!



UNIT 1 | Section A | 1.1.6 Evaluation is More than Science

But Evaluation is Also More than Science

It is true that in a political context considerably more specific definitions of evaluation are used, but on the other hand some very diverse procedures are denoted by the same term.

The measurement of efficiency in economic contexts, for example, is referred to as evaluation just as much as analyses of organisations' efficiency carried out by experts (e.g., the evaluation of scientific institutions), or even the involvement of evaluators in the process of developing or optimising action programmes in a deliberative and moderating capacity.

These days, people seem happy to refer to almost any form of report as an evaluation.



Please click here to learn more about the >> [difference between evaluation and opinion research](#).

With this inflationary use of the term, even 'common' or 'garden' survey research appears cloaked as evaluation. The recording and analysis of assessive (i.e., 'evaluating') statements from respondents who have a calculable relationship to the evaluand (the object to be evaluated), such as customers, clients, affected parties, participants, etc., are presented as evaluation.

Although no specific evaluation design exists, subjective value judgments and assessments, utterances of satisfaction, or information relating to acceptance are recorded. The only difference between this and popular opinion research is that it aims to record not opinions but assessments or estimates of people's satisfaction (cf. Kromrey 2001: 106f.).

UNIT 1 | Section A | 1.1.7 What Else? And Why Scientific?

If this use of the term is contrasted with the scientific understanding of evaluation presented above, it becomes clear in spite of the heterogeneity pointed out that scientifically conducted evaluations distinguish themselves by the following facts:

they relate to a clearly defined object (e.g., political intervention measures, projects, programmes, policies, etc.);

they use objective empirical data gathering methods to generate information;

they explicitly carry out the assessment on the circumstance to be evaluated;

they apply criteria that are precisely stipulated and disclosed with the aid of systematically comparative procedures;

they are as a rule conducted by persons with the appropriate special skills (evaluators);

they aim at making decisions relating to the evaluand.

