

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**Evaluating micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs)
development programmes in Mexico:
A practical participatory approach**

**being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of Hull**

**by
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Summary of Thesis submitted for the PhD degree

by Reyna Karina Rosas Contreras

on

Evaluating micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) development programmes in Mexico: A practical participatory approach

Summary

This thesis is about a participatory approach to evaluation of development programmes for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Mexico. It advocates the use of intangible factors (stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues) and the participation of stakeholders in the process of evaluation. This evaluation approach could complement conventional approaches used to evaluate programmes for MSMEs in Mexico. In considering these ideas, this research explored the evolution of evaluation identified by Guba and Lincoln and noted some of the problems faced in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs (e.g. absence of clear objectives, difficulties in expressing the objectives in quantifiable measures and inappropriateness to deal with social-behaviour inquiry). This research proposed a shift towards a qualitative evaluation approach and developed a Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach. This approach relied upon the accommodation of Guba and Lincoln's Fourth Generation Evaluation and Patton's Utilization-focused evaluation. In this sense, the term accommodation refers to the integration of their methodologies from a practical point of view and their use in parallel from a theoretical point of view. The SRPPE approach considered the claims, concerns and issues (CC&I) of the programme stakeholders as inputs of the evaluation. These refer to the favourable and unfavourable assertions related to the programme and to the declarations of disagreement between stakeholders of the programme. The CC&I are used to analyse components such as decision-making, political, learning and characteristics of the evaluator. The output of the evaluation process promotes conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of the evaluation. This approach was tested using a constructivist and interpretivist methodology in which the nominal group technique and focus groups were used to collect information. The information was analysed and interpreted by following a

qualitative approach and case studies were used to describe the structure and outcomes of the evaluation of two Mexican programmes for MSMEs. The findings of the research project suggested that an evaluation approach which considered intangible factors helped to understand the programmes, revealed the different views stakeholders had, unveiled conflicts due to different stakeholders' interests and provided a guide towards programme improvement.

Chapter 1. Thesis Introduction

1.1 Research interest

This research is about the evaluation of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) development programmes in Mexico. It is important to note that the interest in programmes for MSMEs emerged from a close contact with a small firm. For many years, the researcher has been involved in her family business (micro business), from the conceptualization of the business, to the management of the firm. The difficulties that the family business has faced stimulated the interest in business improvement, and ways of improving MSMEs development programmes in Mexico. The researcher believes that programme evaluation has much to offer in this area.

1.2 Research problem

Programmes for MSMEs development generally have been evaluated considering conventional evaluation approaches bounded to a scientific paradigm, which relies on quantifiable and measurable methods, and judges programmes accordingly (European Commission, 2001; OECD, 2000). The approaches used to evaluate development programmes for MSMEs vary in their degree of sophistication. For example, some organizations evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes based on the number of businesses that participate (e.g. number of users of a programme; number of enterprises registered; number of requests) (Storey, 1998). Other organizations struggle to determine whether their programmes should continue or be terminated using methods such as cost-benefit analysis (Gibb, 1990a). Other organizations evaluate their programmes by focusing on financial indicators of profitability and productivity (Devins, 1999). In the case of Mexico, the majority of MSMEs programmes are evaluated on grounds of tangible and measurable factors.

The use of conventional approaches¹ to programme evaluation has been severely criticised by several scholars (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, 1991 and Collins, 1996) mainly because they deal inappropriately with organizational and social change. Additionally, conventional approaches to evaluation have focused on measuring tangible factors and underestimated or neglected the importance of intangible factors.² As a result, several theorists of programme evaluation have proposed a shift towards qualitative approaches where intangible factors are taken into account. This proposal has implied a change in paradigm postures (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln, 1991; Pawson & Tilley, 1997), suggesting different research assumptions and different research methods (Stake, 1980; Patton, 1997a). For example, Pawson and Tilley (1997) subsume a scientific proposition for the process of evaluation in the social field. They suggested the use of a realistic evaluation framework to focus on “*why* a program works for *whom* and in *what* circumstances” (p. xvi); thus stressing the need to address the contexts and mechanisms of the particular programme.

Following this shift in programme evaluation, this research project introduced a different approach to evaluate programmes directed to develop MSMEs in Mexico. It encouraged a programme evaluation in which:

1. Programme stakeholders were encouraged to participate in all the stages of the evaluation. Programme stakeholders are defined in this thesis as the people directly involved and affected by the programme such as the managers, facilitators and users of the programme.
2. Intangible factors were a core part of the evaluation focus.

Interestingly, the creation of two Mexican organizations, the National Institute of Educative Evaluation (INEE) (Reyes & Jimenez, 2002) and the independent Office of Programme Evaluation (OEP), expected to be opened by 2005 (CIPI-Banco Mundial, 1999), show the recent interest that Mexico has placed in evaluation. However, in the case of programmes directed to develop MSMEs, evaluation (when done) is dominated by conventional approaches where efforts concentrate on measuring indicators such as

¹ This thesis refers to conventional approaches to summarise monitoring, outcome/impact assessment and performance measurement.

² The intangible factors refer to ‘the claims (favourable assertions related to the programme), concerns (unfavourable assertions related to the programme) and issues (declarations of disagreement between stakeholders of the programme)’.

increased sales or profits of assisted SMEs; number of users; number of consultations provided; cost efficiency and various production and delivery parameters (OECD, 2000). On the other hand, in spite of the several benchmarking processes carried out in order to identify best practices and tendencies of MSME policy and practice (Espinosa, 1993) and in programme evaluation (CIPI-Banco Mundial, 1999), there is still no sign, in Mexico, of tendencies towards more pluralistic approaches to evaluation.

It is acknowledged the importance of conventional evaluation approaches, and of the great amount of resources that governments invest in MSME programmes. However, the researcher also thoughts that limiting the evaluation by not considering intangible factors, by not involving the people in the process and by not promoting their participation also limits our understanding; and, what is more important, limits the capability of the different stakeholders to understand and improve the programme.

1.3 Research approach

In order to address the two points mentioned above, the participation of programme stakeholders in all stages of the process and intangible factors as a core part of the evaluation focus, this research evaluated two programmes directed to develop MSMEs in Mexico, using an approach which was developed by accommodating two existing approaches:

1. Fourth Generation Evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989)
2. Utilization-focused Evaluation (Patton, 1997a)

The term accommodation was preferred over integration because there is the question of commensurability when approaches are located in mutually exclusive paradigms (Gregory, 1996); and this is the case of Fourth Generation Evaluation and Utilization-focused Evaluation. There is a prevailing tendency towards more pluralistic evaluation approaches, which try to 'integrate' different standpoints of specific models (Gregory, 1996; Robson, 2000). Rossi and Freeman (1993) called it 'comprehensive evaluation'; Gregory (1996) termed it 'multidimensional evaluation' given that it can "address a host of organizational issues and represents an integration of the methodologies from a

practical point of view and the use of the methodologies in parallel from a theoretical point of view" (p. 305).

The rationale for accommodating these two evaluation approaches was that they seem to be complementary. While, on the one hand, Fourth Generation Evaluation focuses on the claims, concerns and issues of programme stakeholders, it can be viewed as merely theoretical (a similar concern to that of Pitman and Maxwell, 1992). On the other hand, Utilization-focused Evaluation seems to provide a balance by offering a more pragmatic (concerned with the facts and actual occurrences of the programmes) and practical (capable of being put into practice or action) approach that can be of potential interest to programme stakeholders and can enhance the use of evaluation for programme improvement. Improvements are adjustments and changes in the awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, opinions, motivations (short-term outcomes) of stakeholders; behaviour, practice, decisions, policies, social action (medium-term outcomes) of stakeholders and long-term outcomes which result in human, economic, civic or environmental impact of stakeholders (Taylor-Powell, 1998). In other words, the uses given to the evaluation are considered as evaluation outcomes.

The evaluation approach of this research project encouraged several stakeholders to participate in all the stages of evaluation and encouraged a focus on intangible factors in programme evaluation by analysing the claims, concerns and issues (CC&I) of different stakeholders.

In summary, the evaluation approach advocated in this thesis was:

- Participatory because it sought the involvement of programme stakeholders, those that had a stake in the process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and those that made decisions (Patton, 1997a), in all the stages of the evaluation.
- Responsive because it followed Guba and Lincoln's (1989) approach by being focused on programme stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues as organizers of the evaluation.
- Situational because it followed an iterative active-reactive-adaptative process advocated by Patton (1997a) by being
 - “active in deliberately and calculatedly identifying intended users and focusing useful questions ... reactive in listening to intended users and

responding to what they learn about the particular situation ... (and) adaptive in altering evaluation questions and designs in light of their increased understanding of the situation and changing conditions” (p. 135).

- Practical because it focused on providing useful information for programme improvement and decision making (Patton, 1997a).

In order to accommodate these evaluation characteristics in a participatory evaluation approach, use was made of the ideas of Cousins and Earl (1992) and Cousins and Whitmore (1998) on components that influence the utilization process.

According to Cousins and Earl (1992) and Cousins and Whitmore (1998) the evaluation process contains four components:

1. A decision-making component
2. A political component
3. A learning component
4. And an evaluators’ characteristics component.

It is believed that exploring these four components helps to accommodate the evaluation characteristics in a participatory evaluation approach. Thus enabling the evaluation process to be participatory, by considering the researcher’s depth of control over the evaluation, the stakeholders selection of participation and the depth of participation of programme stakeholders; it is also responsive, since the stakeholders’ claims, concerns and issues inform the four components of the participatory evaluation approach; situational, since the action-reaction-adaptation process considers the context where the evaluation is been carried out and practical, by providing information for programme improvement and decision making enhancing the utilization of evaluation results in a threefold manner (conceptual, symbolic and instrumental).

In summary, this research proposed a multilayered analysis to evaluate programmes for MSMEs where Guba and Lincoln’s Fourth Generation Evaluation is accommodated with Patton’s Utilization-focused Evaluation (that is the integration of their methodologies from a practical point of view and their use in parallel from a theoretical point of view) in a participatory, responsive, situational and practical approach. This

accommodation took place through four components: a decision-making component, a political component, a learning component and an evaluator's characteristics component.

1.4 Research questions

This research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Is the participatory approach to MSME programme evaluation, developed in this research, an appropriate way to consider intangible factors in programme evaluation?
2. Do the components of the evaluation approach help to address the programme stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues?
3. Does the participatory evaluation approach help to achieve conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation?
4. Was the methodology used in this research, appropriate to deal with the type of claims, concerns and issues programme stakeholders raised?

1.5 Research contributions

The contribution of this research project can be identified through the interaction of the three topics addressed: Micro small business, programme evaluation and qualitative research.

1. In Mexico, programme evaluation is still confined by the scientific paradigm. The majority of MSMEs programmes are evaluated taking into account tangible and measurable factors, while intangible factors are still widely neglected. Therefore, a participatory approach to evaluation represents a change of the evaluation paradigm to evaluate programmes for Mexican MSMEs. The participatory approach to evaluation called for the interaction of different programme stakeholders and addressed their different CC&I in relation to the MSME programme.
2. Several authors have called for evaluation to focus on intangible factors (e.g. Devins & Gold, 2002; Di Tommaso & Dubbini, 2000; Kumar, 1995; Stame,

1999). This research was a response to that call, evaluating programmes for MSME's development in the Mexican context.

3. The evaluation approach developed in this research focused on the stakeholders' CC&I. It represented a contribution in the sense that it accommodated, in practice, two approaches to evaluation (Guba and Lincoln's Fourth Generation Evaluation and Patton's Utilization-focused Evaluation). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, MSME programmes have not been evaluated in this way before in Mexico. Therefore, this research was an empirical work that sought to balance a theoretical approach and a pragmatic approach to evaluation.
4. This research relied upon the nominal group technique and focus groups in order to explore the CC&I of different programme stakeholders. This was an original point of this research, since little guidance was available on how to explore them.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

A brief summary of the content of this thesis is given below:

Chapter 2 presents an overview of programme evaluation theory. It explores its origins where conventional approaches towards evaluation emphasised the rigorous application of the scientific method to evaluation, to the shift in paradigm where the evaluation process encourages the active participation of different stakeholders.

Chapter 3 presents the general context of MSMEs. It emphasises the importance of MSMEs to national economies and it highlights the efforts that governments and other institutions have made to support MSMEs through various development programmes. Chapter 3 also focuses on programme evaluation and explores the way MSME development programmes have been evaluated.

Chapter 4 focuses on the development of the participatory evaluation approach used in this research, where Fourth Generation Evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and Utilization-focused Evaluation (Patton, 1997a) are accommodated into a situationally

responsive practical participatory evaluation (SRPPE) approach. In this approach, stakeholders' CC&I inform the four components of the practical participatory evaluation framework in order to enhance the utilization of evaluation results in a threefold manner (conceptual, symbolic and instrumental).

Chapter 5 explains how the researcher gathered information through interviews, the nominal group technique and focus groups. It also describes the method used to analyse the information relying upon grounded theory. It also discusses why the case study method was selected as the way to report the intervention carried out in two MSME development programmes.

Chapter 6 describes the fieldwork of this research project. It presents the implementation of the participatory evaluation approach in two programmes for MSMEs development. It also explains how trustworthiness criteria were addressed in this research intervention.

Chapter 7 presents the case studies developed for reporting the interventions carried out in the two programmes for MSMEs development. The case studies are organized around the three uses of evaluation that the SRPPE approach promotes. In this sense, the conceptual use is promoted by identifying the programme stakeholders' particular CC&I. Each case study concentrates on the general issues identified in each programme, where the different views of the different stakeholders are analysed, therefore promoting the symbolic use of evaluation. Finally, in the instrumental use, the recommendations for improvement suggested by stakeholders are presented.

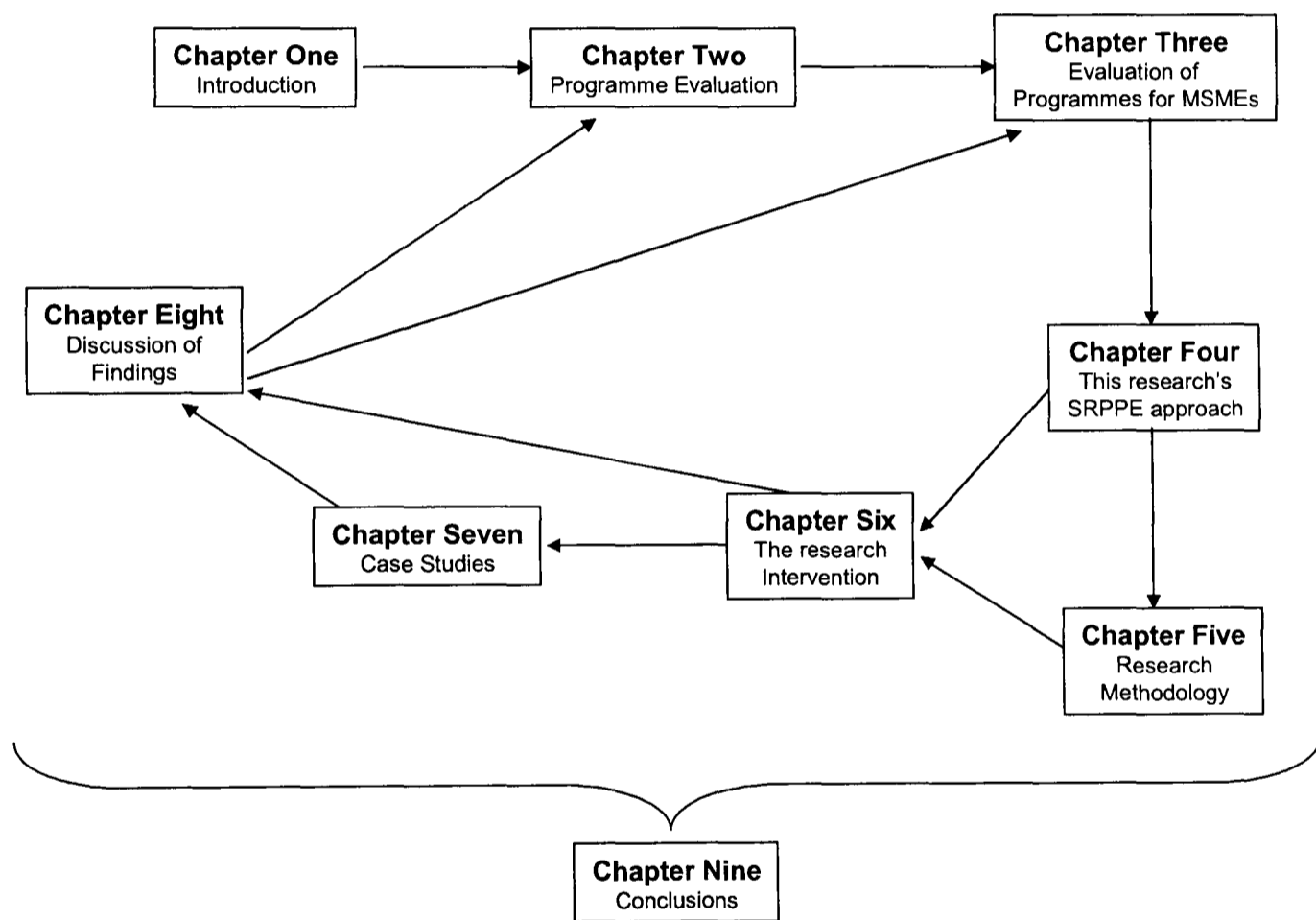
Chapter 8 presents a discussion of the research findings. It explicitly answers the research questions and presents the implications of this research project for the theory and practice of programme evaluation and for the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs in Mexico. This chapter draws out findings from the two programmes evaluated in the research intervention and compares them in the light of the findings of other authors.

Chapter 9 presents the conclusion of the thesis by summarising the research findings, and highlighting the importance of these findings, in general, for the evaluation of

programmes for MSMEs in Mexico, and in particular, for the two programmes evaluated in this research. This chapter reflects upon the possible weaknesses of each intervention and draws out shortcomings and limitations of this research. It also draws out an agenda for further research and finally it summarises the contributions of this research.

The following figure depicts the relationship between each of the chapters of this thesis.

Figure 1.1 Diagram of relationship between the chapters of this thesis



Chapter 2. Programme Evaluation

2.1 Introduction

The introduction of this thesis pointed out that this research is concerned with evaluation of programmes for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Throughout this thesis, the terms micro small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are interchangeable and refer to the same type of enterprises. This is because many authors do not differentiate between them. As stated in the introduction, this research relies upon evaluation theory to build an evaluation approach for programmes directed to develop MSMEs. The evaluation approach considers intangible factors and participation.

In the search for clues to the development of an evaluation approach for MSME programmes, the chapter first concentrates on distinguishing different purposes of evaluation (accountability, developmental and knowledge generation). The section then concentrates on the evolution of evaluation theory based on Guba and Lincoln's (1989) four generations of evaluation as way of organizing the chapter. This allows identification of how evaluation practice has become more sophisticated and how in each of these generations the practice of MSME is reflected.

This chapter presents some of the implications of the first three generations of evaluation leading to a fourth generation of evaluation. Following this, it presents several alternative approaches to evaluation (e.g. Empowerment evaluation; Participatory evaluation; Utilization-focused evaluation; Collaborative evaluation and Stakeholder-based evaluation). This chapter briefly recognizes that MSME programme evaluation heavily focuses on measuring tangible factors and is heavily reliant on the scientific paradigm (this will be discussed further in the next chapter).

In seeking ways of improving MSME programme evaluation, this chapter explores the fourth generation of evaluation, which makes a switch towards considering the importance of the claims, concerns and issues (CC&I) of programme stakeholders

(intangible factors). Finally, the conclusion of this chapter acknowledges the intention to accommodate Fourth Generation Evaluation and Utilization-focused Evaluation.

2.2 Programme Evaluation: Its origins and evolution

During the 1960s, the United States government put emphasis on social policy, setting the scene for modern programme evaluation (Rossi, Freeman & Wright, 1979; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991; Suchman, 1967). Programme evaluation has its early origins in settings such as education, social psychology and sociology. Government's concerns about budget expenditure, project implementation and program effectiveness marked the goals of evaluation (Cronbach & Associates 1980; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991; Weiss, 1987). During the evolution of evaluation, various theorists have contributed in determining different evaluation purposes and in developing a variety of models and approaches. Additionally, multiple epistemologies, methods and priorities were implemented (Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991) and practised in order to evaluate programmes.

The decision as to which evaluation approach to use depends on various factors such as the type of evaluation required; the focus of the evaluation; the project design; time frames; resources; the context; to whom evaluation is directed; who is involved; and the use to which the evaluation results are to be put (Batterbury & Collins, 2000; Robson, 2000; Seyfried, 1998). As recognized by Patton (1997a) "the art of evaluation involves creating a design that is appropriate for a specific situation and particular action or policy-making context" (p. 249).

According to various evaluation theorists, different types of evaluation can be distinguished (Chelimsky, 1997; Cronbach & Shapiro, 1982; Patton, 1997a; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991; Weiss, 1987):

1. Summative evaluations,
2. Knowledge generation evaluations and
3. Formative evaluations.

The aim of summative evaluations is to help decision-makers to take discrete decisions: for example, whether to terminate a programme or to keep it operating (Weiss, 1970). The intention of summative evaluations is to determine the merit the intrinsic value of a programme or its worth its “extrinsic value to those outside the program” (Patton, 1997a, p. 65), in order to decide whether the programme should continue or be terminated. Frequently, in the context of European programmes, evaluations have been summative, concerned with determining only the effects of certain conditions and the degree of achievement of certain programmes (Seyfried, 1998).

The aim of knowledge generation evaluations is to increase the understanding of a programme, and has been periodically addressed in distinguishing between formative and summative evaluations. Knowledge generation evaluation “operates from the knowledge perspective of academic values” (Patton, 1997a, p. 65). Weiss may well be one of the first that emphasized the conceptual use of evaluation through her enlightenment model, oriented to inform policy making (Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991). According to Patton (1997a), knowledge generation evaluation gives a conceptual use of the evaluation findings in order to increase the understanding and knowledge of the programme during and/or at the end of an evaluation, for example, by seeking to understand the programme better or by generating lessons learnt. It enlightens programme founders and staff and strengthens the communication and sharing of perceptions. He also notes that it was not until recently, that this type of evaluation was recognized and appreciated.

In contrast, the aim of formative evaluation is to “improve program performance by influencing immediate decisions about the program, especially about how its component parts and processes could be improved” (Chelimsky, 1997, p. 59). Formative evaluations “use an inductive approach in which criteria are less formal as one searches openly for whatever areas of strengths or weaknesses may emerge from looking at what’s happening in the program” (Patton, 1997a, p. 68).

It is important to note that summative, knowledge-generation and formative evaluations are not mutually exclusive. “These are by no means inherently conflicting purposes, and some evaluations strive to incorporate all three approaches, but ... one is likely to

become the dominant motif and prevail as the primary purpose of informing design decisions and priority uses” (Patton, 1997a, p. 65). Cronbach and Shapiro (1982) argued that the distinction between summative and formative evaluation might create confusion. “Evaluation that focuses on outcomes can and should be used formatively. When a trial fails, the social planner wants to know why it failed and how to do better next time. When the trial succeeds... the intelligent planner... asks about the reasons and essential conditions for the success” (Cronbach & Shapiro, 1982, p.12). In a similar way, Patton (1997a) noticed that special care must be taken when differentiating purposes in order to focus on intent and not on activities, because, for example, “what was supposed to be formative would suddenly have turned out to be summative” (Patton, 1997a, p. 69). Therefore there are frequent confusions in evaluation practice. Stake (1976) tried to clarify the distinction between summative and formative evaluation through an analogy that focused on the user of the evaluation. In this sense he argued that:

“Elsewhere I have noted that when the cook tastes the soup it is formative evaluation and when the guest tastes the soup it is summative. The key is not so much when as why. What is the information for, for further preparation or correction or for savouring and consumption? Both lead to decision-making, but towards a different decision” (Stake, 1976, p.19, emphasis in original).

Scriven (1967) also made clear the distinction between summative and formative evaluations by considering worth and merit values in evaluation. He challenged evaluators to consider not only goal attainment and the use of scales to measure performance (merit) but also the complexity of the situation, the information needs of a variety of stakeholders and the political implications of evaluation (worth).

In spite of the efforts to distinguish between summative and formative evaluations, Guba and Lincoln (1981) acknowledged the complexity and difficulty of doing so, because they have an ‘orthogonal’ relation to merit and worth. In this sense, evaluations of merit can be formative or summative, as evaluations of worth can also be formative or summative.

Table 2.1 shows the relationship between Merit/Worth and Formative/Summative evaluations.

Table 2.1 Relationship of Merit/Worth to the Formative/Summative Distinction: A curriculum example

| <i>Evaluation seeks to establish</i> | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Type of Evaluation</i> | <i>Merit (Developmental Evaluation)</i> | <i>Worth (Adoptive Evaluation) [sic]</i> |
| Formative | Intent: modify and improve design. Audience: entity development team. Source of Standards: panel of substantive experts. | Intent: fit entity to local context. Audience: local adaptation team. Source of Standards: assessment of local context and values. |
| Summative | Intent: critique, certify, and warrant entity. Audience: professional peers; potential adopters. Source of Standards: panel of substantive experts. | Intent: certify and warrant entity for local use. Audience: local decision makers. Source of Standards: local needs assessment. |

Source: Guba & Lincoln (1981, p. 50)

In this sense, as explained by Guba and Lincoln (1981), the intention of formative merit (developmental) evaluation is to modify the programme while it is under development. In contrast, the intention of summative merit (developmental) evaluations is to critique the programme according to certain standards in order to certify and guarantee its merit. The intention of formative worth evaluation is to adapt the programme to the local context or specific situation. Finally, the intention of summative worth evaluation is to certify and guarantee the modified programme for long-lasting local use. In this sense, a flow between the formative-summative and merit-worth evaluation can be identified since, for example, a formative merit evaluation involves the improvement of a programme while it is still running and a summative merit evaluation involves the critique of the programme after it has ended. Similarly, a formative worth evaluation involves adapting the programme to a particular context while it is still running; while summative worth evaluation involves the certification of the programme in a new context after it has ended. Whilst considering this distinction useful, Weiss (1972) argued that programmes are never finished and that they need changes and adjustments to adapt them to the context in which they are being used. Therefore, depending on the conditions of the programme and the purpose of the evaluation, formative merit, or

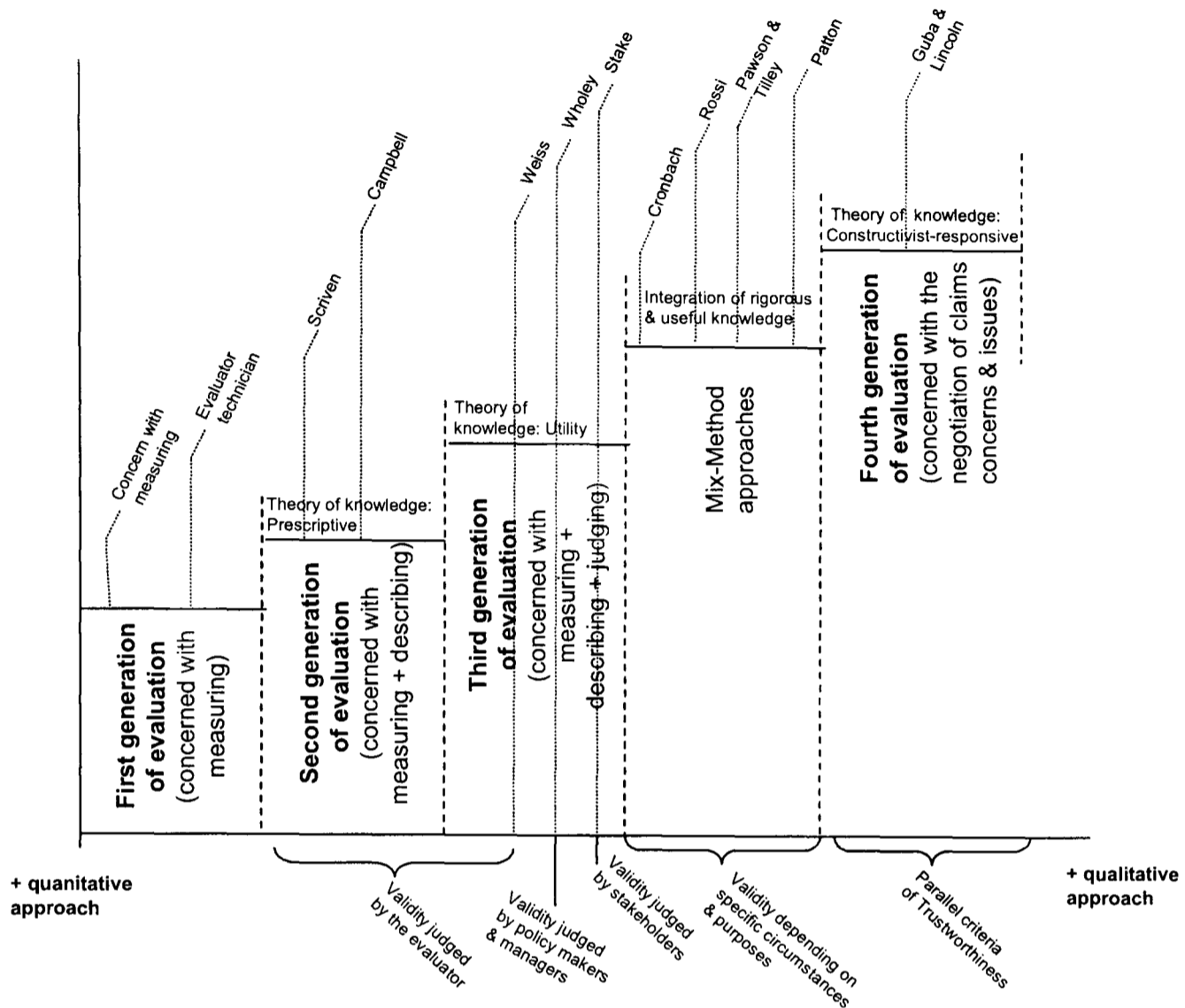
summative merit evaluation, or formative worth or summative worth evaluation could be needed.

According to the European Commission (2001) and OECD (2000), evaluation of programmes for MSMEs has been more summative than formative or knowledge generation oriented. The appropriateness of this approach is discussed in the next chapter.

It is intended that this research be a formative worth evaluation, in the sense that it seeks to contribute to the improvement of MSME development programmes with the main purpose of facilitating the improvement and the generation of knowledge by taking into account the context of the programmes being studied. The approach of this thesis is similar to Pawson and Tilley's (1997) realistic evaluation; however while they are concerned with the "formulation and refinement of social policy and practice" (Tilley, 2000, pp.12-13) they emphasise the role of the evaluator in identifying the mechanisms and context of the evaluation while the approach of this thesis focus on stakeholders driving the evaluation. The questions to address now are: What is the context of MSME programme evaluation? How have MSMEs programmes been evaluated internationally and in the Mexican context? These questions will be dealt with in the next chapter; meanwhile the following sections will focus on the four generations of evaluation as a way of identifying how this evolution can be also reflected in MSME programme evaluation.

As this chapter is organized around the four generations of evaluation identified by Guba and Lincoln (1989), Figure 2.1 presents the main evaluation theorists and concepts developed in each generation. The figure unveils conflicts that prevail in evaluation theory and practice due to different ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. For sake of clarity figure 2.1 frames evaluation theorists and concepts developed within the four generations of evaluation; however it should be noted that a straight forward distinction is difficult to achieve and in fact it could be claimed that the generations overlap. The following sections presents in more detail each of the generations of evaluation.

Figure 2.1 Evolution of Evaluation



2.2.1 First Generation of Evaluation: Measuring

Guba and Lincoln (1989) argued that evaluation theory could be understood as an evolution of four generations of evaluation. The first generation of evaluation was characterized by an emphasis on collecting data and measuring quantifiable phenomena. This emphasis reflected the education system in which the application of testing systems is important (e.g. the application of IQ tests). Later evaluation was used for military purposes in the induction of personnel into the armed services during World War I. During this time, the terms measurement and evaluation were equivalent and the role of the evaluator was that of technician (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The evaluator was expected to know and use all the available instruments to measure several variables. If

an instrument did not exist, it was expected that the technician would create it. However, as recognized by Guba and Lincoln, this type of evaluation is still frequently used.

Examples of the first generation of evaluation

In reviewing different methodological approaches to evaluate policies to support small firms, Storey (1998) distinguished between monitoring and evaluation. He made reference to Bridge, O'Neill and Cromie's (1998) distinction which considers that "monitoring has narrower objectives than evaluation. It is aimed to observing and recording practical indicators of inputs and outputs ... Evaluation has two prime aims: - An improving and learning aim, - A proving aim" (p. 9). Taking into account this distinction, Storey classified the evaluation approaches as if they were "Six steps to heaven", depending on their level of sophistication. He suggested that within monitoring, the first step is the 'take up of schemes', where the concern is to quantify the number of firms that participate in a certain programme. He argued that information is collected mainly to document expenditure without considering if the money was effectively spent. Similarly, Andersson (2000) noted that many policies and programmes directed towards SME development are not fully effective, mainly due to a limited application of evaluation. Gibb (1990a) argued that the expenditure of public funds demands accountability; therefore, different forms of control and evaluation have been developed. For example, counselling and training programmes are frequently evaluated considering the costs per client, while loan guarantees and special grants are measured considering the level of attendance and the level of expenditure. Gibb questioned the appropriateness of such narrow and simplistic approaches to evaluate programmes and argued that quantitative criteria focus on short term benefits and neglect long-term benefits (Gibb, 1990a). According to OECD (2000), in Mexico, several programmes for MSMEs development are evaluated according to the following measures:

- the number of users of a programme;
- the number of enterprises registered;
- the number of Web site visitors;
- the number of requests; and
- the number of programmes promoted.

The following (analysed in section 3.6.1) is a summary of how programmes offered by the Mexican government, through several public organizations, have been evaluated (where information is available): The Supplier Development Programme considers indicators of number of participating firms, number of interviews carried out, number of business deals and number of potential businesses. The Integrating Firms Programme considers the number of integrating firms established and measurable benefits such as sales increase and cost reductions of SMEs participating in the programme. The SIEM Programme considers the number of enterprises registered, the number of programmes promoted by SIEM and the number of visits to the SIEM Web site. Similarly, the Business Opportunities Network Programme considers measures according the number of Internet consultations. As a result, it could be argued that in Mexico, programmes for MSME development are still evaluated through a first generation approach.

In general, this section has pointed out that the first generation of evaluation focuses on measuring quantifiable factors, and that many programmes in Mexico are still evaluated in this way. The first generation of evaluation represents the beginnings of evaluation theory and practice. The next section presents the Second Generation of Evaluation, which relies upon the first generation.

2.2.2 Second Generation of Evaluation: Describing

The second generation of evaluation was also developed within educational settings, where the focus was on measuring whether students had learnt what they were expected to learn. The learning of the students was measured through the accomplishment of educational or learning objectives (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) argued that in the second generation of evaluation, the evaluator kept the technician characteristic of the first generation; in addition the role of the evaluator was to assess whether the students achieved the learning objectives and to describe the weaknesses and strengths of the programme, depending on specific stated objectives. The purpose of knowing these weaknesses and strengths was to improve the programme. However, the results were only available after the end of the programme.

Within this second generation of evaluation, measurement was considered one of the tools used to evaluate programmes.

Examples of the second generation of evaluation

A fundamental principle of policy evaluation is the clear specification of objectives; however, unclear objectives are regarded as the Achilles' heel of small business policy (Storey, 1998). For example, Storey (1994, 1998) noted that in UK there is no White Paper stating the objectives and targets of SMEs public policy;³ and therefore, in his analysis he had to infer the objectives considering different individual measures.

Table 2.2 presents some of the possible intermediate and final objectives of small firm policy in UK.

Table 2.2 Objectives of small firm policy

| Intermediate | Final |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 Increase employment | - Increase employment - Reduce unemployment |
| 2 Increase number of start-ups | - Increase number of start-ups - Increase stock of firms |
| 3 Promote use of consultants | - Promote use of consultants - Faster growth of firms |
| 4 Increase competition | - Increase competition - Increase wealth |
| 5 Promote 'efficient' markets | - Promote 'efficient' markets - Increase wealth |
| 6 Promote technology diffusion | - Promote technology diffusion - Increase wealth |
| 7 Increase wealth | - Votes |

Source: Storey (1994, p. 260)

Storey (1994, 1998) criticised this lack of clear policy objective and argued that targets tend to be unclear when objectives are also unclear.

³ More recently, the White Paper *Competitiveness: Forgoing Ahead* (DTI, 1995a) and its complement *Competitiveness: Helping Smaller Firms* (DTI, 1995b) have positioned small businesses as key element in UK's Government policy (Blackburn & Jennings, 1996).

On the other hand, it is also argued that different objectives call for different evaluation approaches (Batterbury & Collins, 2000; Robson, 2000; Seyfried, 1998; Squire, 1995).

For example, in developing economies, frequently policies for SMEs are linked to economic growth and poverty alleviation (Bridges, 2002). Arguing the importance of clear objectives, Squire (1995) discussed the evaluation of poverty alleviation programmes in developing countries. She presented two Bolivian programmes. The first one was the Emergency Social Fund (ESF) programme, which intended to provide "... emergency relief and carrying out an employment generating economic reactivation program designed to assist the population groups most acutely affected by the economic crisis" (p. 28). To evaluate this programme, Squire used household data about labour income to show that, on average, earnings were higher after than before the programme. Later, during the 90s, the attention turned towards long-term development instead of emergency relief. A second programme was funded, the Social Investment Fund (SIF). It intended to "mobilize external assistance of the social sectors and to extend coverage of health, education, and water and sanitation services to more of the poor" (p. 29). To evaluate this programme, Squire used various measures such as: child mortality, nutritional status and academic achievement. Squire (1995) pointed out that in order to carry out an appropriate evaluation for each programme, it was necessary to take into account their objectives. While one programme intended to provide emergency relief, the other intended to promote long-term development. As a result, each programme required an evaluation based on different measures. In another example, she argued that if an objective of a programme is to elicit the priorities of a community, then evaluation should also focus on the mechanism used to ensure that the interests of all members of the community are reflected. Therefore, different indicators could be used, such as number of meetings, attendances and frequency of votes (quantitative measures) and individuals' beliefs that their views are considered (qualitative measures).

The second generation of evaluation represents a step further in sophistication; where not only measurement is important, but the clear specification of general and particular objectives is needed. Considering this and taking into account the importance of evaluation, OECD (2000) developed a framework to evaluate the efficiency of SMEs' policies and programmes. OECD states that the framework of evaluation should consider the country's objectives, which include:

- “Overall government objectives (e.g. economic growth, job creation, enhanced competitiveness, export promotion, regional growth policies, etc.).
- Objectives of the SME programme being evaluated (they should be compatible with overall government objectives and should address market failures).
- Framework conditions (e.g. the tax system, overall macroeconomic conditions, the regulatory environment, bankruptcy laws, competition policy, etc.)” (p. 28).

Broadly speaking, the second generation of evaluation, in contrast to the first generation of evaluation, emphasises the importance of the clear specification of objectives. The specification of objectives calls for a coherence between general and particular objectives, in the sense that programme objectives should be explicit, reflect the overall government objectives, and consider the framework conditions. The next section presents the third generation of evaluation, in which the role of the evaluator is that of a judge.

2.2.3 Third Generation of Evaluation: Judging

The increasing interest in judging programmes marked the beginning of the third generation of evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In this generation the role of the evaluator was based on the previous two generations. In this sense, in the third generation of evaluation, the evaluator retains the technical and descriptive functions of the previous two generations of evaluation, but an additional role is introduced, of judging the programme according to stated standards. During this generation, different evaluation models emerged such as Stake’s objective-oriented model (Countenance Model); Stufflebeam’s decision-oriented model (CIPP Model); Scriven’s Goal Free Model and Eisner’s Connoisseurship Model (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). These models are briefly summarised as follows:

- a) Stake’s Countenance Model involves completing two “data matrices” that emphasise the description and judgement of the programme across time, listing intended antecedents, transactions and outcomes and recording observed antecedents, transactions and outcomes (Stake, 1980).
- b) Stufflebeam’s CIPP Model presents a system of planning evaluation that considers four approaches to evaluation: context evaluation identifying needs,

opportunities, problems, and goals; inputs evaluation determining plans, resources, personnel and schedule needed; process evaluation considering the implementation, costs and design flaws; and product evaluation examining the outcomes, side effects and impact (Stufflebeam, 1997).

- c) Scriven's Goal Free Model considers the effects of the programme, rather than its goals, as organizers of the evaluation. The evaluator carries out the evaluation with the purpose of discovering what the programme is doing (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).
- d) Eisner's Connoisseurship Model relies on the judgement and perspectives of an expert evaluator, valued because of his/her presumed expertise and knowledge. According to Eisner (1975), Connoisseurship is the "art of perception that makes the appreciation of such complexity possible" (p.1).

These models have some shortcomings. For example, Guba and Lincoln (1981) criticised Stake's Countenance Model because it failed to provide any operational guidance to specify the standards by which programmes ought to be judged. Similarly, Scriven's Goal Free Model failed to provide a guide to specify which effects an evaluator should look for or how to identify them (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). In relation to Eisner's Connoisseurship Model, Guba and Lincoln (1981) noted the shortcoming that it failed to provide operational guidelines to follow a process which relied heavily on the evaluator's competence in collecting data, analysing it, processing it and interpreting it.

Examples of the third generation of evaluation

Programmes for MSMEs development have been evaluated through the third generation of evaluation approach, where an external evaluator is responsible for judging the programme according to certain predefined standards. For example, according to the OECD's (2000) evaluation framework, programmes for MSMEs should be evaluated considering the efficiency of the programme in different areas such as appropriateness, superiority, systemic efficiency, own efficiency and adaptive efficiency (in the following chapter this evaluation framework is analysed in detail).

Similarly, Gibb (1990a) noted that in Europe development programmes for SMEs are frequently evaluated considering costs and benefits. The purpose was to quantify the ‘ultimate effect’ of the support provided, considering the creation of employment, added value and profit turnover. However he strongly criticised this approach, because it sought to relate short counselling or training programmes with ultimate performance indicators without considering the complexity that surrounds small firms (e.g. start-up process, political environment and the attitudes of business owner-managers). Gibb (1990a) presented a statement that characterises the simplistic view of this approach:

“Out of one hundred businesses counselled (for one short counselling) thirty businesses have been started. After two years only ten of these businesses had failed. The average failure rate is one out of every three businesses. Therefore the ‘effect’ of the counselling is a real additionality of ten or thirty three percent survival improvement” (Gibb, 1990a, p. 28).

In a similar way, Devins (1999) noted the interest in measuring the impact of programmes aimed at supporting micro businesses especially focusing on financial indicators of profitability and productivity. However he questioned the validity of using these measures for several reasons:

- The unincorporated nature of micro businesses (Cambridge Small Business Research Centre, 1992)
- The accounting practices of micro businesses that lead to problems in collecting and auditing data.
- The priorities of micro business’ owner-managers which frequently are not based on profit maximisation (Baines & Wheelock, 1998).

Devin’s arguments for questioning the use of measures of impact of programmes reflect the way structures can direct firm behaviour and therefore the importance of considering the context of the programmes and the appropriateness of evaluation for particular contexts.

In general, the third generation relies upon measures and on the explicit statement of objectives, as did the previous two generations of evaluation. However, the third generation of evaluation is more sophisticated than the previous two generations,

because in addition, it presents the decision-making purpose of judging the programme's efficiency, in order either to continue with it or to close it down. However, the lack of utilization of evaluation has been frequently questioned (Greene & McClintock, 1991; Lincoln, 1991; Patton, 1987, 1997a; Weiss, 1987).

The developments of the first three generations of evaluation have influenced the way evaluation is carried out; therefore, before presenting the fourth generation of evaluation, the next section looks at some of the implications of the first three generations.

2.2.4 Implications of the first three generations of evaluation leading towards a Fourth Generation of Evaluation

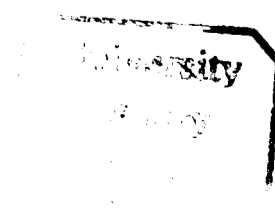
The first three generations of evaluation could be considered conventional because they frequently use quantitative methods to support judgements about a programme. A characteristic of these three generations of evaluation is that the evaluator had an emerging active role in measuring, describing and judging the programme being evaluated, while the evaluands (e.g. programme managers and stakeholders) had a passive role in the evaluation process because they had no influence in shaping or defining the “judging standards” used by the expert evaluator, nor had they a role in conducting the evaluation.

These developments in evaluation led to different perspectives of what evaluation should be. In this sense, Rossi, Freeman and Wright (1979, p. 31) considered that “evaluation consists essentially of superficial, impressionistic judgments of programs”. They asserted that evaluations could include different types of judgements such as ‘common sense’ judgements and assessment of whether activities or interventions agree with commonly approved professional standards. They defined what they called ‘systematic evaluations’ as: “those which employ the basic approaches to gathering of valid and reliable evidence that have been developed in social sciences” (Rossi, Freeman & Wright, 1979, p. 31). Moreover, they noted that systematic evaluations should have the characteristics of replication of the observation by others if using the same instrument; the results should be tested in order to determine whether they could have take place in the absence of the intervention, and information should be given on

whether programme funds are efficiently used or not. Their definitions of systematic evaluation or evaluative research led them to recognize different types of evaluations such as: evaluation of programme planning and development, project monitoring evaluation, programme impact evaluation and economic efficiency evaluation.

First implication: Involving multiple stakeholders in the evaluation process

Weiss's (1972) early approach to evaluation research is characterized by the combination of the second and third generations of evaluation. She specified that the purpose of evaluation research is "to measure the effects of a program against the goals it set out to accomplish as a means to contributing to subsequent decision making about the program and improving future programming" (1972, p.4). Her core requirements for the conduct of evaluation research on a programme were that goals must be clear, specific and measurable. She also placed special emphasis on using the evaluation's results to improve policies. Weiss also acknowledged that the typical design of evaluation is the experimental model. In this model, an experimental group receives or is affected by the programme while a control group is not. Measurement of some defined variables is taken in order to compare the two groups. The programme is considered as successful if the experimental group improves more than the control group. In spite of Weiss's preference for doing evaluation research following the scientific method, she acknowledged that the research design depends on the purpose of the evaluation and the use given to its results. Later developments on Weiss's approach to evaluation recognized the value of quasi-experimental design to evaluation. The quasi-experimental design is not as strict as the experimental design because some variables are left uncontrolled. Weiss's work also valued the non-experimental design to evaluation. In this, she was the first to acknowledge the relevance of qualitative approaches for evaluation purposes. Her shift towards qualitative approaches was due to her concern about making better use of research and the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the process. Weiss's (1995) later work is focused on theory-based evaluation where she suggests addressing the theoretical assumptions embedded in the programmes as way of concentrating on key aspects of the programmes, on eliciting stakeholders to make their assumptions of the programme explicit and on having more impact on policy. However, the use of quasi-experimental designs in the evaluation of MSME programmes has been questioned. For example, Devins (1999) noted the



difficulties in establishing control groups due to the heterogeneity of MSME sector, moreover, he added that the establishment of control groups seemed rather complicated if the diverse personal and organizational factors are considered. Therefore, control groups are not really a feasible way to study MSMEs.

Second implication: Measuring intangible factors

As indicated previously, cost-benefit analysis or economic efficiency evaluation influenced the first three generations of evaluation. Drummond, O'Brien, Stoddart and Torrance (1997, pp. 8-9) defined economic evaluation as “the comparative analysis of alternative courses of action in terms of both their costs and consequences”. Rossi, et al. (1979) supported economic evaluation, and stated that whenever possible, evaluation should be viewed as an incremental activity where “implementation is examined first, then impact, and then, if efficacious, cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness, thus constituting a comprehensive assessment” (p. 45). Additionally, Weiss (1972) clarified that cost-benefit analysis tries to:

- 1) identify programmes' benefits, both tangible and intangible;
- 2) identify the direct and indirect costs of conducting the programme; and
- 3) express them in a common unit of measure (e.g. dollars).

Weiss argued that the benefits to costs ratio represents the return to the society for its investment in the programme. However, dealing with intangible factors presents problems; for example, she noted that it is difficult to express them in monetary terms, it is difficult to select indicators of benefits, and it is difficult to quantify them.

Third implication: Critiques to the first three generations of evaluation

In spite the frequent use of approaches represented by the first three generations of evaluation, they have been severely criticised by several scholars (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, 1991 and Collins, 1996). Lincoln (1991) argued that evaluators “... need to move beyond cost-benefit analyses and objective achievement measures to interpretive realms ... to begin talking about what our programs mean, what our

evaluations tell us, and what they contribute to our understandings as a culture and as a society” (p. 6).

In a similar way, Collins (1996) stated that the approaches of the three generations of evaluations are complex in the way they are designed and carried out. The users of the programme often never see the results of the evaluation. She even suggested that managers of programmes are limited in their understanding of the results. She also argued that the evaluation techniques (e.g. measuring, describing and judging)

“are clearly unsuitable for local governance projects and programmes, or indeed any activity which promotes a participatory development process. Traditional methodologies are inadequate for measuring the qualitative involvement of bottom-up approaches involving local people and organisations in their own development, nor can they reflect the hardships experienced in attaining their involvement” (Collins, 1996, paragraph 23).

In a similar way, Weiss (1987) acknowledged some reasons for the small use of programme evaluation, for example, the deviation from experimental method, where control groups were not randomly assigned; the short time allocated for programme follow-up; the use of unrealistic measures to judge programme effectiveness and statistical failure of the models in considering variables of social context. These statements reflect that even advocates of a rigorous scientific approach to evaluation recognize the difficulties and burdens that the approach has.

Fourth implication: Evaluation shift in MSME research

A parallel development, in small business research, to that of the evolution of evaluation could be recognized. As mentioned by Curran and Blackburn (2001) “...until relatively recently quantitative analysis and positivist explanations dominated small business research much as they have in business and management research generally” (p.95). Cramer (1994) and Vogt (1999) gave three reasons for this. First, they mentioned the success of the natural science approach that led researchers to believe that it could be also successfully applied to business research; second, the strong cultural interest in understanding phenomena numerically; third, the development of statistical techniques and the ready accessibility of computers and programmes that allowed a variety of relatively easy ways to handle information.

However, as in evaluation theory, small business researchers are more willing to take the advantages of qualitative approaches; therefore, they mixed quantitative and qualitative research (Curran & Blackburn, 2001). In programme evaluation, several theorists proposed a shift towards qualitative approaches. For some, this shift implied a complete change in paradigm postures (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln, 1991), for others the shift was oriented to the use of qualitative methods (Stake, 1980; Patton, 1997a). The shift towards qualitative approaches has important implications for this research. The evaluation of programmes for MSME could be identified with the first three generations of evaluation, where there is a strong reliance on the use of measuring, describing and judging, and a strong reliance on the scientific method. However, approaches identified within the three generations of evaluation have been questioned because they do not deal appropriately with people's involvement. Involvement is important because MSMEs and the business owner-manager are a heterogeneous sector (Devins, 1999). This made the researcher realise the need to explore this paradigm shift in evaluation of programmes for MSMEs, towards a qualitative approach in which the people involved in the programme were taken into account as participants in the evaluation process, in order to improve these programmes.

The following section introduces the shift towards qualitative approaches in evaluation.

2.2.5 Mixing methods and alternative evaluation approaches

Social sciences and business research have changed since 1960s, when the use of ethnographic and qualitative research made progress (Curran & Blackburn, 2001). For example, in small business research non-positivist analysis has become more important (Curran & Blackburn, 2001). In relation to evaluation, several authors (Cronbach et al., 1980; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) observed that current evaluation literature is different from the literature prior to 1970, and that qualitative approaches towards evaluation have become more widely practised (Cronbach & Shapiro, 1982; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991). In this regard, some authors (e.g. Weiss, Wholey and Stake) who relied heavily on quantitative research, have developed an interest in the use of evaluation by stakeholders (Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991).

Authors such as Cronbach and Rossi integrated the concerns of the second generation of evaluation, with the concerns of third generation evaluation. They suggested a more complex perspective that determined evaluation practices depending on specific circumstances and purposes (Greene, 1998; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991). They advocated methodological pluralism. While Cronbach's interest was to match methods and questions depending on the situation and the context (e.g. using case studies, sample surveys or randomized experiments), Rossi's priority was causal inference through randomized experiments (Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991). These two mixed approaches to programme evaluation sought to use quantitative and qualitative strategies in the different stages of evaluation (design, data gathering, analysis and interpretation) (Greene & McClintock, 1991).

As evaluation theory progresses Cook (1997) identified a shift in which qualitative methods for evaluation influence its practice, mainly due to two aspects: The first one reflected the concerns of sociologists like Patton, regarding the limitations of quantitative methods and the utility of qualitative methods. The second aspect reflected the preference of qualitative methods for evaluation, of authors such as Guba and Lincoln and Stake, because epistemologically they are considered more adequate than quantitative methods for answering process oriented and perception related questions.

In this sense, Guba and Lincoln (1981) contrasted the scientific and naturalistic paradigms and concluded that, when dealing with a social-behavioural inquiry, the naturalistic paradigm is more useful than the scientific paradigm, because it considers the multiple realities and the complexity of the interactions between the researcher and the participants of the research, and takes into account the context in which human behaviour occurs.

Stake (1980) questioned the use of measurable results in educational evaluation as the only evidence of the worth of a programme. He expressed his preference for qualitative methods. Stake stated that "many of my fellow evaluators are committed to the idea that good education results in measurable outcomes: student performance, mastery, ability, attitude. But I believe it is not always best to think of the instrumental value of education as a basis for evaluating it" and goes on, asserting that "the evaluator should

not presume that only measurable outcomes testify to the worth of the program” (Stake, 1980, p. 78).

Nevertheless there is still a struggle between quantitative and qualitative approaches of evaluation. For example, Weiss in spite of her emphasis on stakeholders’ involvement in the evaluation process, considered that qualitative approaches to evaluation have some limitations because “without hard data, it was often difficult to convince potential users that the results represented more than the opinions of a sensitive and usually sympathetic observer” (Weiss, 1987, p. 43). Thus, researchers continue to appeal to the supposed objectivity of evaluation approaches.

Qualitative approaches to evaluation approaches have resulted in several types evaluations. For example:

Empowerment evaluation, participatory evaluation, utilization-focused evaluation, collaborative evaluation and stakeholder-based evaluation (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Fetterman, Kaftarian & Wandersman, 1996; Patton, 1997a). Even though differences among these types of evaluations need to be recognized, they represent an alternative approach to evaluating programmes. They are briefly described as follows:

- *Empowerment evaluation* advocates
 - “the use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination ... it is designed to help people help themselves and improve their programs using a form of self-evaluation and reflection” (Fetterman, 1997, p. 382).
- *Participatory evaluation* acknowledges the contradiction between an evaluation's design and findings, and the lack of applicability or utility that the information has for primary consumers and stakeholders (Cousins & Earl, 1992). Participatory evaluation aims to be practical, useful, formative and empowering:
 - “practical in that they respond to the needs, interests and concerns of their primary users; useful because findings are disseminated in ways in which primary users can use them; and formative because they seek to improve program outcomes. Finally, the more the project is determined, implemented and used by participants, the more empowering the experience will be” (Upshur & Barreto-Cortez, 1995, paragraph 5).
- *Collaborative evaluation* seeks to increase the use of findings, to generate social theory and to empower participants (Patton, 1997b).

- *Stakeholder-based evaluation* is an approach which attempts to “... reorder the evaluator’s relationship with the groups involved in the program -that is, the people whose lives are affected by the program under evaluation and the people whose decisions will affect the future of the program” (Bryk, 1983, p.1).
- *Utilization-focused evaluation* advocates the ‘intended use by intended users’. Patton (1997a) notes that utilization-focused program evaluation is an “... evaluation done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended uses” (p. 23).

Empowerment evaluation, participatory evaluation, collaborative evaluation; stakeholder-based evaluation and utilization-focused evaluation all, to a certain degree, seek stakeholders’ involvement in the evaluation. In all of these approaches the evaluator is not the central figure, but is more a facilitator or co-ordinator of the evaluation process. In addition, in these approaches, the aim of evaluation is not only to evaluate but to improve the programme (Batterbury & Collins, 2000; Fetterman, 1997; Upshur & Barreto-Cortez, 1995).

From the approaches presented above, Patton (1997a) argued that Utilization-focused evaluation does not advocate any model, method or theory of evaluation but, instead, is a situationally responsive approach which considers the special conditions and characteristics of the evaluation situation, such as context, people, values, needs and interests. In order to be situational and responsive, Patton urged evaluators to be active, reactive and adaptive. In this sense, evaluators should actively seek to obtain information about the programme in order to focus the evaluation on questions that are of real interest to primary stakeholders.⁴ The evaluator reacts to this information and works with stakeholders in designing a useful and practical evaluation. In the process of designing and conducting the evaluation, the evaluator adapts to the new needs of information and the changing conditions (Patton, 1987, 1997a).

In the different types of qualitative evaluations presented above, different levels of involvement of stakeholders and of the evaluator can be identified. It is a similar

⁴ For Patton (1997a) stakeholders “are people who have a stake –a vested interest- in evaluation findings (they could be) program funders, staff, administrators, and clients or program participants” (p. 41).

situation to that of social research; specifically to ethnographic research, where there can be identified different levels or roles of the researcher when using participant observation method (May, 2001).

The different types of evaluation could create a certain confusion. This is because exact boundaries between these different types of evaluation are not easily recognized. For example, Patton (1997a) asserted that "...empowerment evaluation changes the role of the evaluator from the traditional judge of merit or worth to a social change agent" (p. 103), while recognizing a similar perspective to utilization-focused evaluation. He stated that "from a utilization-focused perspective, the important point is this: Using evaluation to mobilize for social action, empower participants, and support social justice are options on the menu of evaluation process uses" (Patton, 1997a, p. 103). Similarly, he noted that participatory and empowerment evaluation approaches seek to increase "participants' engagement, sense of ownership, and self-determination" (p. 91), and also attributed the same characteristics to collaborative evaluation.

The difficulty of identifying boundaries among evaluation approaches has led scholars to search for differentiating characteristics (Feuerstein, 1986; Rebien, 1996). In this respect, Rebien (1996) proposed three different participation levels in order to recognize projects that are really participatory from those that are not:

- The first level of participation relates to the active involvement of stakeholders as subjects in the evaluation process rather than having a passive role as objects and sources of data.
- The second level of participation recognizes that, as it is impossible to involve all stakeholders in the evaluation process, a representative group should participate.
- The third level of participation states that stakeholders should participate in at least designing the terms of reference, interpreting the data and using the evaluation information.

Gregory (2000) recognized the importance of Rebien's work, even though she criticised it in the sense that the three levels of participation were considered "insufficiently

defined to be able to act as criteria capable of being operationalised in practice and, indeed, may promote practices which actually have a negative impact on participation, rather than a positive one” (p. 184). She considered that there is a lack of methodological foundations for active involvement of stakeholders, especially taking into account the frequent tendency of participants to create dependency relationships with the evaluator. She also noted that in order to have a representative group of participants, some would be excluded and it was necessary to justify who was included and who was not.⁵ She noted that if participants were only involved in some stages of the evaluation process, then they would lose a more holistic understanding of the evaluation process. Arguing in favour of the involvement of programme stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, Guba and Lincoln placed characteristics of participation and empowerment at the centre of the Fourth Generation of evaluation. The following section introduces Guba and Lincoln’s fourth generation of evaluation.

2.2.6 Fourth Generation Evaluation: Responsive-constructivist evaluation approach

Fourth Generation evaluation is an approach proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1987). This approach “takes as its point of focus not objectives, decisions, effects, or similar organizers but the claims, concerns, and issues put forth by members of a variety of stakeholding audiences” (Guba & Lincoln, 1987, p. 208). Guba and Lincoln describe these terms as follows:

“A *claim* is any assertion that a stakeholder may introduce that is favourable to the evaluand” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 40, italics in original).

“A *concern* is any matter of interest or importance to one or more parties. It may be something that threatens them, something that they think will lead to an undesirable consequence, or something that they are anxious to substantiate in a positive sense (a claim requiring empirical verification)” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, pp. 33-34, italics in original).

“An *issue* is any statement, proposition, or focus that allows for the presentation of different points of view; any proposition about which reasonable persons may disagree; or any point of contention” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, pp. 34-35, italics in original).

⁵ As noted in Chapter One stakeholders are defined in this thesis as ‘any people involved and affected by the programme’.

Fourth Generation Evaluation represents a breakthrough in evaluation theory. Guba and Lincoln (1989) stated that "... we do not treat evaluation as a scientific process, because it is our conviction that to approach evaluation scientifically is to miss completely its fundamentally social, political, and value-oriented character" (p.7). Their approach is based on Stake's responsive approach to evaluation. They proposed an evaluation approach that is not oriented to measurement, description or judgment, but to the negotiation of CC&I of programme stakeholders. In this sense, a claim represents a favourable assertion related to the programme, a concern represents an unfavourable assertion related to the programme, and an issue represents the declaration of disagreement between stakeholders of the programme.

In addition to considering the stakeholders' CC&I, Guba and Lincoln (1989) also advocated a radical change towards the constructivist paradigm, which assumes a relativist ontology, an interpretivist (naturalistic) epistemology and a hermeneutic methodology. This radical change of paradigm in relation to evaluation has different research implications.

A relativist ontology considers the meanings that individuals assign to events or actions when attempting to make sense of their experiences (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Therefore, the purpose of doing an evaluation is not to find a "true" or objective answer. The purpose of evaluation is to identify and understand the different views about the programme, because different people experience programmes in different ways. Guba and Lincoln (1989) noted that this ontological posture influences the epistemological and methodological assumptions. Therefore, they argued that the researcher could not be distant and detached from the participants of the evaluation, and that certainly the researcher's values influenced the research process. Moreover, the values of different stakeholders influenced the evaluation process because it took place in a certain context (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The methodological assumptions of the Fourth Generation Evaluation encourage consideration of the different interpretations of the stakeholders. In this sense, Guba and Lincoln (1989) advocated a hermeneutic methodology which involves a continuous dialogue between stakeholders. The hermeneutic dialectic circle is used as a way of eliciting stakeholders' interpretations. It involves a cyclic evaluation process where stakeholders' interpretations are presented to other stakeholders in order to be analysed, criticised and reanalysed until they change their minds as the context

alters, thus conforming a more sophisticated interpretation. What Guba and Lincoln espoused is the use of open-ended individual interviews with different stakeholders in order to collect and make sense of their perspectives. They clearly stated that in the hermeneutic dialectic circle, the facilitator asks an initial respondent, being interviewed, to comment on the entity being evaluated and to name another respondent that could provide a different perspective from the one exposed. The facilitator analyses the first respondent's central themes, issues, claims and concerns and formulates an initial construction. Then the facilitator interviews a second respondent and after allowing the same liberty of comments as the first respondent, introduces the first respondent's views and ask for comments on them. In the same way as with the first respondent, the facilitator asks for the name of another respondent to include in the circle, and with the information provided produces a more sophisticated construction, and so on. As they noted, "the process is repeated with new respondents being added until the information being received either becomes redundant or falls into two or more constructions that remain at odds in some way (typically, because the values that undergird the different constructions are in conflict" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 152). As a criticism to Fourth Generation Evaluation it could be argued that the process followed in the hermeneutic dialectic circle could alter the respondent's initial world view and therefore could have ethical implications.

The hermeneutic dialectic circle allows interpretations to be analysed, criticised, reanalysed and re-criticised. This process could lead to the emergence of revised or new interpretations. The purpose of the evaluation process is that, jointly, researcher and stakeholders make sense and better understand the interactions in which they are engaged.

Applications of the Fourth Generation Evaluation approach

Applications of Fourth Generation Evaluation have been found mainly in subjects of study such as community development, participatory research and in the health care sector. For example, Petheram (1998) noted that in a review of evaluation of agricultural extension, fourth generation evaluation was a particularly responsive approach to the needs of the farmers. Ducharme and Trudeau (2002) used Fourth Generation Evaluation to design an evaluation of a nursing intervention of caregivers of

elderly persons. In small business research, Devins and Gold (2002) advocated for a social constructionist view to support small business managers. They concluded that in evaluation of programmes for SMEs there was a need “...to move away from an approach based on positivist, largely economic principles towards an approach based on fourth generation principles” (p. 116). In this, inquiring on the CC&I is suggested as a methodology to support small business managers and their enterprises.

Critiques of Fourth Generation Evaluation

The Fourth Generation Evaluation approach is not free of criticisms. For example, Cousins and Whitmore (1998) considered that Fourth Generation Evaluation is not as participatory as Guba and Lincoln (1989) claim. They argued that the evaluator plays a dominant role in trying to engage completely in the local circumstances and in the construction meanings of the different stakeholders.

Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) core idea of negotiation considered that “stakeholders and others who may be drawn into the evaluation are welcomed as equal partners in every aspect of design, implementation, interpretation, and resulting action of an evaluation” (p. 11). The idea of negotiation assumed that stakeholders have equal political powers. O’Neill (1995) criticised the idea of equality among constructions advocated by the Fourth Generation Evaluation. He considered inappropriate the fundamental requirement of balancing power between evaluator and evaluands, at least during the time of the evaluation. O’Neill (1995) argued that formal and covered power inequalities are the norm within human organizations, therefore, it is unrealistic to assume that power differences could disappear for a period. Similarly, Pawson and Tilley (1997) noted the difficulties in achieving consensus of the claims and concerns of stakeholders in order to develop joint constructions since stakeholders begin the process with different assumptions.

Shadish, Cook and Leviton (1991) criticised the idea of the *trustworthiness model*⁶ for judging the adequacy of Fourth Generation Evaluation. They argued that concepts such as external reality and causality are still present in philosophical discussions, and that

⁶ This model presents parallel criteria to internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity and will be presented in the chapter related to the methodology.

there is no general agreement about the best paradigm for evaluation. In contrast, Guba and Lincoln (1989) assumed that naturalistic inquiry is the dominant paradigm for Fourth Generation Evaluation.

Guba and Lincoln's evaluation approach can be viewed as more theoretical than practical, separated from actual evaluation practice. For example, Pitman and Maxwell (1992) argued that its proponents "... give no actual examples of such an evaluation (Fourth Generation), and the guidelines that they provide strike us as abstract and programmatic" (p. 743).

In summary, this section pointed out that Fourth Generation Evaluation is a shift from quantitative to qualitative approaches to evaluation. One of the concerns pointed out by several authors is that it is too theoretical and offers little operational guidance. Therefore, the evaluation approach of this research seeks to address this concern by operationalising an eclectic theoretical approach; seeking to accommodate Guba and Lincoln's Fourth Generation Evaluation approach to another more practical evaluation approach: Patton's Utilization-focused evaluation. The accommodation of both evaluation approaches is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented the origins and evolution of programme evaluation theory and practice. In doing so, it distinguished three different purposes of evaluations:

1. The accountability purpose, which is the basis of summative evaluations. Its purpose is to rendering judgments.
2. The developmental purpose, which is the basis of formative evaluations. They aim to facilitate improvement.
3. The knowledge generation purpose. They seek to understand the programme being evaluated and to generate knowledge about it.

This chapter pointed out that these are not conflicting purposes and some evaluations seek their integration (Patton, 1997a). This chapter recognized that this research adopts

a formative evaluation approach because its purpose was to contribute to ameliorate MSME development programmes, therefore, seek to improve and generate knowledge considering the context of the programmes that were evaluated.

The chapter also explained Guba and Lincoln's evolution of evaluation. Each generation presented the main evaluation theorists and concepts developed. The chapter discussed some of the conflicts that prevail in evaluation theory and practice, and how each generation became more sophisticated. The chapter pointed out how the developments of each generation were reflected in evaluation of programmes for MSMEs.

The first generation of evaluation was characterized by its focus on measuring (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The evaluations of programmes for MSMEs were concerned in quantifying and accounting the results of each programme (Gibb, 1990a; Storey, 1998). The second generation was concerned with measuring and on describing the weaknesses and strengths of the programme depending on stated objectives (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The third generation was built upon the previous two generations, and in addition to measuring and describing, the third generation encourages judgements about the programme outcomes. Within this generation of evaluation, different evaluation models emerged (e.g. Countenance Model, CIPP Model, Goal Free Model, and Connoisseurship Model). From these models Stake's model led to a change in paradigms of evaluation. In MSME policies and programme evaluation, the third generation was reflected in the interest in having an external evaluator responsible of judging the policy or programme according to certain predefined standards (Gibb, 1990a; Devins, 1999; OECD, 2000). It also focused on tangible factors. These first three generations of evaluation were regarded as conventional evaluation approaches because of their reliance on quantifiable methods and measures and their reliance on the scientific method. In spite of the frequent use of conventional approaches to programme evaluation, they have been criticised because of their inappropriateness to deal with social-behaviour inquiry (Collins, 1996; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, 1991). Therefore, a shift towards qualitative approaches to evaluation was proposed (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Stake, 1980). In small business research a similar trend was acknowledged because non-positivist analysis has become more used (Curran & Blackburn, 2001).

It has been pointed out that evaluation of programmes for MSMEs still follows the first three generations of evaluation. This chapter also described some alternative approaches to evaluation, for example, empowerment evaluation; participatory evaluation; collaborative evaluation; and stakeholder-based evaluation. It explored in more detail the utilization-focused evaluation approach and sought to encourage the use of fourth generation evaluation to evaluate programmes for MSMEs.

With this intention, this chapter explored the fourth generation evaluation. This generation is a breakthrough because now the evaluation can be driven by the stakeholders' CC&I. Guba and Lincoln (1989) ask for a radical change in paradigm in encouraging this approach to evaluation.

The approach used in this research aims to complement actual programme evaluation practices considering Guba and Lincoln's idea of taking into account the CC&I of programme stakeholders (intangible factors) as a way of organizing the evaluation.

Finally, it was pointed out that there is a tendency seeking to 'integrate' different approaches to evaluation (e.g. Gregory, 1996; Robson, 2000; Rossi & Freeman, 1993). Considering the criticism that Guba and Lincoln's evaluation approach can be viewed as theoretical and too far removed from actual evaluation practice, this research sought to balance this problem by accommodating Guba and Lincoln's Fourth Generation Evaluation approach with Patton's Utilization-focused Evaluation.

As the accommodation of Guba and Lincoln's and Patton's evaluation approach is applied in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs, the next chapter presents how programmes for MSMEs have been evaluated in Mexico and discusses why it is important to introduce a more participatory approach to their evaluation.

Chapter 3. MSME Programme Evaluation

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a detailed review about the evolution of evaluation theory. It identified four generations of evaluation theory and pointed out some conflicts that prevail between each generation because of their different ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the context of Mexican micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and of the programmes that seek their development. The overview presented in this chapter is important because this research presents two case studies based on programmes for Mexican MSMEs.

The chapter starts by providing different definitions of MSMEs. Due to different definitions of MSMEs, it could be said that it is easier to describe them, than to define them, thus the main characteristics are therefore presented.

Having identified what MSMEs are and described their characteristics, the chapter presents a general overview of the importance of MSMEs for different national economies. The efforts that different countries make in order to provide support to programmes for MSME development are described.

An account is also given of trends in economic development that influence policy and evaluation. These trends consider intangible factors in programme evaluation and a shift from SMEs policies towards entrepreneur policies.

The focus is then turned to the policies and programmes the Mexican government offers to support the development of MSMEs, making reference to the importance of MSMEs for the Mexican economy, to the different programmes offered by the Mexican government aiming at supporting them, and to the way these programmes have been evaluated.

This chapter also describes the influence that the scientific paradigm has on evaluating these programmes. It identifies methodological problems associated with evaluating programmes for MSMEs through measurable and tangible factors and underestimating the importance of intangible factors. Finally, the chapter concludes by noting the need for a different perspective towards evaluating programmes for MSMEs. This perspective builds upon the importance of intangible factors, by suggesting that a practical participatory approach to evaluation of MSME development programmes can provide information on factors that are not easy to measure but that influence and affect the programme's outcomes and its participants.

3.2 MSME definitions and characteristics⁷

It has been widely recognized that MSMEs are important because they represent a significant portion in the business sector of economies and produce most of the business turnover (Amin & Thrift, 1994; OECD, 2002).

It is difficult to define MSMEs because different countries measure the size of enterprises according to different factors, such as the sector; number of employees; sales turnover; profitability and net worth (OECD, 2000, 2002). For example, in Japan, MSMEs are defined considering the sector, number of employees and assets. In the United States, the definition considers the number of employees and business receipts or business assets (SBA, 2001). In the United Kingdom, in addition to quantitative criteria such as number of employees and turnover; qualitative criteria such as being independent businesses; managed by its owner or part-owners and having a small market share, are considered (SBS, 2002). In Mexico, MSMEs were first defined according to the number of workers and annual net sales. Later, this definition was modified to consider the number of employees in different sectors (see for example Diario Oficial de la Federación, 1985; SECOFI, 1999).⁸

The different definitions of MSMEs and the lack of a uniform definition have created problems for small business research, because it makes it difficult to compare MSMEs

⁷ MSMEs, SMEs, small firms and small enterprises terms are used interchangeably in this thesis.

⁸ Except where other wise stated, all the translations from Spanish are the author's.

between countries and sectors (Curran & Blackburn, 2001; Gibb, 1992b; Lundström & Stevenson, 2001; Stevenson & Lundström, 2001; Storey, 1994).

With the aim of overcoming various problems with business stratification, and specially difficulties on resources allocation, the European Commission encouraged a single MSME definition based on number of employees, annual turnover or annual balance-sheet total, and a criterion of economic independence of ownership. Table 3.1 shows the definition suggested by The Commission of the European Communities (1996).⁹

Table 3.1 European Commission SME Definition

| Criteria | Micro | Small | Medium |
|----------------------------|-------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Number of employees | < 10 | < 50 | < 250 |
| Annual turnover or | -- | < 7 million euros | < 40 million euros |
| Annual balance-sheet total | -- | < 5 million euros | < 27 million euros |
| Independence* | -- | 25% | 25% |

* Maximum % of voting right owned by one or several enterprise(s) which are not themselves SMEs

The main problem with the definition of MSMEs shown in Table 3.1 is that there is limited data about annual turnover, annual balance sheet total, and the percentage of independence; therefore, frequently, the number of employees is the only criterion considered (e.g. European Commission, 2002a; 2002b). As a result, for practical reasons, researchers and organizations in several countries use the number of employees as a way to classify businesses (Lundström, & Stevenson, 2001; Storey, 1994). Often, MSMEs are defined as those organizations that are not large enterprises. Although there are some differences between sectors, usually large enterprises have more than 500 workers and micro enterprises are considered as part of the small enterprise sector.

In developing countries the distinction between micro and small businesses is more important because the micro sector is considerably bigger compared to the small sector.

⁹ A public consultation has been carried out on the SME definition; the consultation ended on September 2002 and a modified draft has been presented. [Online site] http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/consultations/sme_definition/consultation2/153_sme_definition_25_6_2002_pp1_11_en.pdf [Accessed 30/April/2003]

Table 3.2 shows the business classification that OECD (1997a) considered appropriate for countries with industrialized economies. In contrast, Table 3.3 shows the business classification in Latin American countries, based on the number of employees.

Table 3.2 Business classification considering number of employees in industrialized countries

| Country | Micro | Small | Medium | Big |
|----------------|--------|---------|---------|------|
| Canada | | | <200 | >200 |
| France | | | 10-499 | >500 |
| Germany | | | <500 | >500 |
| Italy | 51-100 | 101-300 | 301-500 | >500 |
| Japan | | | <300 | >300 |
| Spain | | <200 | <500 | >500 |
| United Kingdom | <10 | 10-49 | 50-499 | >500 |
| United States | <20 | 20-99 | 100-499 | >500 |

Source: modified from OECD (1997a)

Table 3.3 Business classification considering number of employees in Latin American development countries

| Country | Micro | Small | Medium | Big |
|-------------------|-------|--------|---------|------|
| Chile | 1-9 | 10-49 | 50-99 | >100 |
| Colombia | 1-10 | 10-199 | | >199 |
| Brazil (industry) | 1-19 | 20-99 | 99-499 | >500 |
| Mexico (industry) | <30 | 31-100 | 101-500 | >500 |
| Peru | 1-4 | 5-19 | 20-199 | >200 |
| Venezuela | <5 | 5-20 | 21-100 | >100 |

Sources: Canto (1992) and NAFIN (1995a)

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 show some similarities and differences between these two classifications. For example, the majority of the countries with industrialized economies do not have a special classification for micro businesses. Micro businesses are considered part of the small enterprises (excepting the USA and UK). In contrast Latin American countries distinguish between micro and small businesses and have a special classification for each sector.

In industrialized countries, large enterprises are considerably bigger than in Latin American countries. Most of the industrialized countries classify businesses with 500 employees or more as large enterprises, while Latin American countries classify businesses with more than 100 or 200 employees as large enterprises.

Although there is no universal agreement on the definition of MSMEs, it is widely recognized that they represent an important portion of the total number of enterprises and they make a significant contribution to job creation and to countries' economies (NAFIN, 1995a; OECD, 1997a).

Before proceeding to discuss the importance of MSMEs in the international context and specifically in the context of Mexico; and noting the difficulties in finding an agreement on the way to define them, it is important to look at MSMEs' characteristics, because it could be argued that it is easier to describe them than to define them.

Frequently, large enterprises have been considered as a model for small enterprises. MSMEs have been treated as a "scaled-down" version of large enterprises (Curran & Blackburn, 2001; Keats & Bracker, 1988; Storey, 1994). This misconception is avoided by distinguishing between the characteristics of small and large enterprises. In this sense, Kubr (1988) recognized the following factors as differentiating between small and large enterprises:

- a) Small enterprises are basically financed from personal or family savings.
- b) In small enterprises the manager has close personal contact with workers and customers.
- c) Small enterprises operate in a limited geographical area, filling limited demands in specialised markets.

Kubr (1988) and Davies and Kelly (1972) believed that the source of strength for small enterprises is based on focusing on specialized markets. Moreover, it is believed that small enterprises are more flexible than larger one and can adapt quickly to changing demands and conditions (Kubr, 1988; Vaessen & Keeble, 1995). An advantage of small enterprises is the personalised attention of their owner and managers, because "in many industries there are small firms unable to compete with the larger firms on a price basis that nevertheless survive because of the service they provide" (Davies & Kelly, 1972, p. 69). Therefore, the personal attention that owner-managers provide is an important characteristic that distinguish small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Burns (1989), Davies and Kelly (1972) and Kubr (1988) argued that a crucial characteristic of small firms is their personal management approach, where the owner-manager participates in all aspects of the business management and in all major decisions. Therefore, Kubr (1988) also argued that the typical owner-manager is a more motivated person and usually “works longer, harder, and provides greater incentive to workers by personal example” (p. 296). Gibb (1992a) recognized that most owner-managers are dominant and impose their management style, and that their ambition is the key factor for growth of the business. In a similar way, Keats and Bracker (1988) and Kets de Vries (1996) suggested that certain characteristics of owner-managers influence the small firm’s performance. For example, by analysing in depth the owner-management characteristics, Curran and Blackburn (2001) recognized that each owner-manager has personal goals, as well as business goals and that the former influence the latter.

Differences between family businesses and small businesses have also been recognized (Davies and Kelly, 1972; Kets de Vries, 1996). This distinction is made basically considering that the basis of authority differs between family business and other types of business. Generally, in Mexican MSMEs a marked influence and integration of the family can be noted (Camp, 1989; Carpintero, 1998; Perez-Lizaur, 1997; Skertchly, 2000). Kets de Vries (1996) studied the family influence on SMEs and recognized that family businesses are different from other small firms because individuals develop a strong individual identification with the business and because there is a challenge in establishing a balance between family and business concerns.

When doing SME research, researchers also have employed some characteristics and roles that differentiate SMEs from other types of enterprises as their definition (Curran & Blackburn, 2001; Penrose, 1980). For example, Hollander (1967) defined small firms as businesses that involve most of the business functions and decisions relating with production, marketing, financing and management and do not exceed a size that does not allow personalised management. Hollander also suggested that small businesses are self-initiated, largely self-financed and self-managed. In a similar way, using different factors for describing small businesses, Kubr (1988) argued that their definition varies according to the nature of their activities, their purpose, and the level of development of the area where the business is located. He also noted that the number of employees,

money value of sales, capital investments, the energy requirements, or several combinations of these factors provide the criteria to describe small businesses. Kubr (1988) pointed out that “In most discussions ... by management consultants, it is conceded that a small enterprise is one in which the administrative and operational management are in the hands of one or two people who also make the important decisions in that enterprise” (Kubr, 1988, p. 295).

In summary, although there is general agreement on MSMEs importance to national economies, there is no universal agreement on the way of defining them. Some countries define them according to the sector, others according to the number of employees, or sales turnover, and others through a combination of quantitative and qualitative factors. This section argued that it is easier to describe them than trying to define them. Some of their characteristics are:

- a personal management approach;
- close personal contact with employees and customers;
- limited markets that give MSMEs flexibility to adapt to changing conditions and demands; and
- link and influence of family factors in the business.

In Mexico, researchers also have tried to identify Mexican MSMEs characteristics (Camp, 1989; Perez-Lizaur, 1997; Rueda, 1999). However, they refer to the same issues mentioned previously, and an integration of the factors can be noted. In this sense, Skertchly (2000) noted that Mexican SMEs owner-managers are not used to assuming financial risks and avoid contracting debts. Perez-Lizaur (1997) attributed this to the economic instability faced in the country. ENAMIN¹⁰ (2000) showed that during 1998, in the manufacture sector, 70% of owner-managers used their own savings as a financial resource, 15.5% used loans from friends and relatives and only 0.94% used bank loans (ENAMIN, 2000, p. 33). In a similar way, Carpintero (1998) noted that in many cases a separation between the family's and business's budget does not exist and this could be the reason that Mexican MSMEs' owner-managers are willing to take few financial risks. Highlighting how the family affects SMEs and taking into account its

¹⁰ Encuesta Nacional de Micro-Negocios [National survey of Micro-businesses]

characteristics of organization, ENAMIN (2000) recognized that 53.8% of employees, in manufacturing SMEs, were part of the family, and also that family members or friends recommend 28.3% of the hired workers. Camp (1989) illustrated this relationship in the following way:

“Family control over the business world alters the goals and therefore the very definition of a successful entrepreneur. (Citing Lauterbach, he continues arguing that) ... In countries like Mexico, a businessman tends to consider business not as an impersonal activity of economic man directed at maximization of profit but as an extension of his family’s drive for social status” (Camp, 1989, p. 36).

Having identified the different factors and characteristics used in order to define and describe MSMEs, the following section focuses on the importance of MSMEs in the international context and in specific for the Mexican economy.

3.3 MSME importance: International & Mexican perspective

As indicated in the previous section, some countries with developed economies do not have a special definition for micro enterprises. Enterprise classifications commonly begin with small, or with small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Differentiating between small and micro enterprises is important because in that way their individual contribution to the economy is better appreciated.

Table 3.4 shows three indicators of SMEs’ importance in some OECD countries (the amount of SMEs, their contribution to workforce and to the gross domestic product - GDP).

Table 3.4 Importance of SMEs in Developed Economies

| Country | Amount of SMEs (%) | Workforce contribution (%) | GDP contribution (%) |
|----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Canada | 99.8 | 66 | 57.2 |
| France | 99.9 | 69 | 61.8 |
| Germany | 99.7 | 65.7 | 34.9 |
| Italy | 99.7 | 49.0 | 40.5 |
| Japan | 99.5 | 73.8 | 57.0 |
| Portugal | 99.0 | 79.0 | 66.0 |
| Spain | 99.5 | 63.7 | 64.3 |
| United Kingdom | 99.9 | 67.2 | 30.3 |
| United States | 99.7 | 53.7 | 48.0 |

Source: Modified from OECD (1997a, p. 17)

According to Table 3.4 SMEs make an important contribution to the economies of OECD members. For example, the percentage of SMEs' economic units exceeds 99% of the total amount of enterprises in those countries; the contribution to employment generation varies between 49% and 79%, and the contribution to GDP ranges between 30% and 66%.

In the case of UK, statistics provided by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) (2001b) on SMEs showed that they constitute almost 99.8% of the total number of businesses; they generate 55% of the employment, and 51% of turnover. In the United States of America (USA) the Small Business Association (SBA) (SBA, 2003) noted that SMEs represent 99.7% of all employers; they created three-quarters of USA net new jobs (2.5 million of the 3.4 million total) and created more than 50 percent of non-farm private gross domestic product (GDP).

As regards Latin American countries, Table 3.5 shows the importance of micro, small and medium businesses according to three indicators in three countries. It must be noted that, in these cases, it was possible to make a distinction between micro and small, medium-sized enterprises (PyMe).¹¹

Table 3.5 Importance of MSMEs in Latin American Countries

| Country | Amount of business (%) | | | Workforce contribution (%) | | | GDP contribution (%) | | |
|---------------|------------------------|------|-------|----------------------------|------|-------|----------------------|------|-------|
| | Micro | PyMe | Total | Micro | PyMe | Total | Micro | PyMe | Total |
| Brazil | 90.6 | 8.7 | 99.3 | 35.2 | 44.3 | 79.5 | 8.2 | 30.2 | 38.4 |
| Mexico | 79.5 | 19.2 | 98.7 | 29.5 | 34.4 | 63.9 | 12.7 | 27.4 | 40.1 |
| Peru | 53.0 | 12.2 | 65.2 | 29.0 | 35.0 | 64.0 | 8.0 | 41.0 | 49.0 |

Source: Canto (1992), NAFIN (1995a) and NAFIN (1995b)

Table 3.5 indicates that in these three Latin American countries, the micro sector constitutes the majority of all business, but as workforce contribution and GDP contribution is analysed their impact diminishes. It can be recognized that the amount of micro businesses in the three countries is significant, but their GDP contribution tends to be lower than that of small and medium-sized enterprises. In the case of Mexico, where large enterprises represent 1% of all enterprises, they contribute 60% of GDP (Secretaría de Economía, 2000c).

¹¹ (PyMe)Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas [Small and medium-sized enterprises].

The small contribution that micro enterprises make to the GDP has been attributed to their lack of technological development, to the inability to integrate micro enterprises into productive chains and to the fact that they are subsistence enterprises (Rueda, 2001). Subsistence enterprises refer to those firms whose main goal is the survival of the domestic unit, not the accumulation of capital (Rueda, 2001). Subsistence enterprises are seen as a way out from unemployment (Murphy, 1996).

Although there is no accurate database of all the Mexican MSMEs, the official information acknowledges that in Mexico, during 1998, MSMEs represented 99.46% of the total of enterprises (3,038,514 registered enterprises in different sectors). They employed 60.64% of the total work force (INEGI, 2001) and generated 40% of the GDP (Secretaría de Economía, 2000c; Secretaría de Economía, 2000d).

In general, this section recognized the importance of MSMEs to different economies. Their importance is shown through indicators such as proportion of all enterprises, workforce contribution, and contribution to GDP. Due to their importance, governments around the world have tried to support and promote MSMEs. The following section presents some of the efforts that different governments have made to support and develop MSMEs.

3.4 Programmes supporting MSMEs' development

Governments have developed different programmes to provide support and encourage the development of MSMEs (Deakins, 1999; Neck, 1987; OECD, 2002). As mentioned by Neck (1987), policies promoting SMEs were introduced to support SMEs as a means of economic and social development. These policies resulted in financial and non-financial assistance programmes. However, some countries, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, have questioned the value of providing SMEs with special governmental assistance, arguing that what it is needed is an overall economic climate and adequate policies oriented towards enterprise efficiency. These governments argued that the market can provide many services for SMEs more effectively than government (Neck, 1987).

Programmes for MSMEs' development can be provided by various institutions, associations, agencies, corporations, companies, professional associations, firms and practitioners, distributors and/or individuals (Marsden, 1987; Neck, 1987). They may deal with issues including advice, consultation, management, education, financial support, technology and development in general (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2000; Gibb, 2000; Howlett & Ramesh, 1995; Neck, 1987; Shapero & Sokol, 1982). Neck (1987) recognized that a common problem with programmes for MSMEs is the lack of co-ordination or duplication of activities, or both, since most institutions are capable of providing a wide range of services.

Governments of some countries (for example Canada, Japan, UK and USA) have implemented different policies and programmes to develop SMEs according to their specific characteristics. Some countries that have achieved better results regarding business promotion are those that have allowed markets to operate with some degree of freedom and that have considered a legal framework for SMEs (Marsden, 1987). A legal framework recognizes the importance of SMEs and establishes specific actions and programmes in order to promote their development. It should be mentioned that these countries also have special institutions in charge of SMEs' promotion and development (for example: Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), USA' Small Business Administration (SBA), among others).

As recognized by Neck (1987), within development programmes for MSMEs, many types of financial, technical and managerial services are available. These services cannot be supplied by a single institution, and many MSME programmes are carried out by private sector organizations or public/private enterprises (Gibb, 1990b).

Table 3.6 shows some organizations that promote SME development in different countries.

Table 3.6 Organizations promoting SMEs' development in different countries

| Country | Institution | Offered programmes |
|---------|--|---|
| Brazil | Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE-SP) | Financial assistance Foreign trade and exports promotion Training Consultancy and technology assistance |
| Japan | Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) | Business consultancy Technology research and development Foreign trade and exports promotion Managerial and labour training |
| U.K. | Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) | Managerial and labour training Financial assistance Technology innovation Consultancy and technical assistance Foreign trade and exports promotion |
| U.S.A. | Small Business Administration (SBA) | Administrative and technic consultancy Foreign trade and exports promotion Technology research and development Financial assistance Entrepreneurial development |

Source: DTI (2001a), SBA (2001), SEBRAE-SP (2001) and Secretaría de Economía (2000c)

Neck (1987) considered that programmes for management development should focus on occupational, managerial and entrepreneurial skills training. Special attention is required for training methods and materials in order to meet the needs of a heterogeneous sector. Holliday (1995) noted that one of the principal problems facing SMEs' training is their lack of time. "Training is often something to be introduced 'in the future' when a firm will be more stable and organised" (p. 10).

With regard to financial assistance, it is usually provided as fixed capital –long term finance-, working capital, venture capital, credit guarantees, grants and loans, and reduction in tax rates (Neck, 1987; Gibb, 1990b). Technological assistance programmes usually provide advice, facilities, testing, research and general technological information (Neck, 1987).

Due to the diversity of MSMEs' needs and weaknesses, Neck (1987) argued that programmes for MSME development should be implemented by different organizations. In this connection, he pointed out that financial and managerial assistance should be separated but coordinated. Technical assistance should be independent from financial assistance due to the difference in competence between clients and their different

financial needs. Each financial need should be addressed by a different financial institution.

This section has pointed out that there are different institutions that provide a variety of programmes aimed to support SMEs in different areas. Gibb (1990b) noted that “to some degree the state of development of the small business sector reflects government policy... (consequently) present policies will also impact on the future” (p. 2). The following section presents trends in economic development considered influential to the development of MSME policies and to the evaluation of MSME programmes.

3.5 Intangible factors and from programmes for MSMEs to programmes for entrepreneurs

Stern (1996) pointed out new perspectives of economic development that influenced the trends of policy and evaluation, and that also influenced SME and entrepreneurship policy and evaluation. He argued that considerations of economic development have evolved. In some countries, the reason for a redefinition of economic development was dissatisfaction with policies that did not deliver the benefits promised. In other countries, the reasons cited were fiscal pressures; in others, the concern was competitiveness in a globalized economy.

Stern (1996) noted that the shift in the way economic development is perceived has impacted upon the content, process and level of analysis. In relation to the content of economic development, Stern (1996) noted that there has been a shift from “... purely physical measures -building factories, roads and port facilities- to measures that encompass the institutional and socio-cultural environment of economic development and relatively intangible factors such as entrepreneurship, capacity building and encouraging innovation” (p. 454). Therefore, Stern recognized the relevance of the socio-cultural environment and the intangible character of measures towards entrepreneurship. Additionally, Stern (1996) also recognized a shift of economic development towards processes such as innovation management, local development and partnership development. Finally, referring to the level of economic development, the shift has been directed towards meso-level analysis (Di Tommaso & Dubbini, 2000;

Stern, 1996). The meso-level analysis refers to “the nature of economies external to the enterprise¹² which emerge in, (the) ... ‘complex systems of firms’ usually characterized by the presence of a plurality of small and medium sized firms” (Di Tommaso & Dubbini, 2000, p. 24); as opposed to micro-level analysis, which refers to the economies within the enterprise (e.g. considerations of efficiency and flexibility). Cooke and Morgan (2000) made an outline of SME industrial district and policy. In this sense, Cooke addresses regional development via SME clustering, whilst Morgan tends to address learning theory in SMEs through collection regional partnerships and activities (what he calls *Learning region*). In addition, Di Tommaso and Dubbini (2000) highlighted the importance of studying small firms from a systemic perspective, which considers the complexity of the interactions and power issues between individuals in taking decisions and which brings the entrepreneurial organizational action to the analysis.

Arguing for the importance of intangible factors for economic development, Stame (1999) distinguished between intangible means and intangible ends. Intangible means are elements, referred to on the literature of social capital, such as trust and the use of local knowledge. Intangible ends could be entrepreneurship or capacity building. However, some factors could be both means and ends, for example innovation and training. Stame acknowledged that intangible factors affect evaluations, not only because they are difficult to measure but also because of the assumptions made in traditional evaluations (e.g. assumed causal relationship between investment input and return outputs; assumed impartiality of institutions). She called for an understanding of the programme and the relationships it has to other effects as well as their achievement. She presented a scheme to deal with intangible factors taking into account the relationship between the implementing agency and the beneficiary, and used it to compare different methods of evaluating programmes for SMEs. This scheme has three dimensions, each of them with positive and negative intangible effects. Dimension I is ‘the mechanism of allocation of resources’; Dimension II is ‘the behavior of partners’ and Dimension III is ‘the mechanism for inducement to act’. Dimensions I and III deal

¹² Di Tommaso and Dubbini (2000) clarify that according to Marshall, the meso-level analysis refers to “situations in which the activity of one agent involves spill-over effect which, not intentionally, have an impact on the activity of another agent” (p. 25). (For example, the existence of a specialized local labour market or the physical concentration of diversity of firms).

with topics of ex-ante evaluation, while Dimension II deals specifically with topics of formative evaluation (Stame, 1999).

As stated in the previous chapter, this research is oriented towards a formative approach to evaluation. Therefore, Table 3.7 shows Stame's Dimension II and the following paragraphs describe it and present some examples of its application.

Table 3.7 Dimension II - Behavior of partners

| | | Public administration | |
|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| | | Responsible | Not responsible |
| Beneficiary | Involved | 1 | 2 |
| | Not involved | 3 | 4 |

Source: Stame (1999) p. 107

The components of the behaviour of partners, shown in Table 3.7, are concerned with the interaction between partners (public administrators or providers or implementing agency and the beneficiary). Stame's Dimension II helps to identify the interactions between partners (providers and beneficiaries). Although the localization of the interaction on the matrix gives a value judgment, she notes that it helps in determining the point of equilibrium in each situation. In this sense:

“The public agency can feel responsible for the success of the beneficiary and engage in a close helping relationship, or it may consider its only task is to give the money and let the beneficiary show his/her ability (not responsible). The beneficiary can feel involved showing that aid was deserved in the light of the declared goals, or just utilized the money for his/her particular immediate interests (not involved)” (Stame, 1999, p. 107).

As stated by Stame (1999), a responsible attitude of public administration is better than an irresponsible attitude and an involved attitude from the beneficiary is better than non-involvement. She argued that in considering Dimension II assessment of the programme achievements is needed and an investigation of how the positive intangible factors deal with the negative intangible factors (i.e. who is or feels responsible).

As an example, she presented the case of programmes oriented toward providing funds for new equipment for businesses in less developed areas. She argued that the main problem of this type of programme is “whether the process through which the new

endowment is obtained and the way it works have succeeded in mobilizing the human resources present in the area” (Stame, 1999, p. 108). In addition, she highlighted that the main way of evaluating these programmes has been by measuring the investment return rate, sacrificing the consideration of intangible effects for financial and performance indicators.¹³ When applying her scheme in the evaluation of a specific programme, she noted that individual business development was linked not only to cost reductions but also to other intangible factors (e.g. the ability to act on foreign markets and to increment the product value). Moreover, she argued that if the implementing agency had been more responsible for the outcomes and involved the beneficiary more in the process of evaluation, a considerable human capital enhancement could have been achieved, as the same business could have performed better and other businesses could have been benefited.

Stame (1999) presented a second example that has an intangible goal in its own conception: that of a Young Entrepreneurship promotion programme. The aim of this programme is to create new young entrepreneurs. She highlighted that the evaluation of this type of programme is based primarily on whether businesses that received aid obtained gains in sales or number of jobs (tangible effects) as compared to those businesses that did not receive aid. As a criticism of this type of evaluation approach, she highlighted that a quasi-experimental design is oriented towards tangible results and not towards programme implementation and therefore it presents only impact assessment and does not consider process evaluation. With regard to the results of the programme, she noted that this type of evaluation only considers the firm and not the people who are the programme’s target and can be associated with intangible ends (i.e. entrepreneurship or capacity building). She asserted that “... what might be a positive result for profitability might not mean new entrepreneurial capacities had been created ... and what might be a negative result in terms of profitability could be a step in the learning process of the new entrepreneur” (Stame, 1999, p. 110). She concluded by noting the importance of considering the intangible factors responsible for economic development.

¹³ Stame (1999) mentions as some of the negative tangible effects that have been neglected in programme evaluations are, on the part of the beneficiaries: the inability to devise projects and a tendency towards clientelism; and from the implementing agency: inefficiency and rent-seeking.

For example, in the European Commission programmes of support for SMEs, Batterbury and Collins (2000) recognized three areas in which the Commission carries out and uses evaluations. These areas are programme evaluations “with a primary emphasis on the gathering of data to demonstrate the workability of programmes and their outputs” (p. 3); thematic evaluations “concerned with the collection of data around particular themes of interest to the Commission and the generation of new understanding and approaches associated with those themes” (p. 6); and institutional evaluations which focus on “the capacity of the institution to deliver the programme effectively” (p. 7). Batterbury and Collins argued that the effectiveness and delivery capacity of the Structural Fund programmes can be enhanced through the direct involvement of stakeholders in the process of evaluation. Bachtler, Polverari, Taylor, Ashcroft and Swales (2000) have also indicated the importance of recognizing the intangible factors in the evaluation of the Structural Fund programmes of the European Commission. They stated “one of the major challenges for the future will be to insert a qualitative dimension into evaluation, measuring the quality as well as the quantity of programme activity - especially in relation to more intangible outcomes” (p.38).

In a similar way, confirming the importance of intangible factors and their frequent denial, Di Tommaso and Dubbini (2000) identified some limitations of traditional economic theory in relation to small firms that are relevant to this research. They noted the lack of consideration of factors such as the importance of the entrepreneur in the overall functioning and decision making of the business; the highly socio-cultural condition of small firms, which makes it difficult to apply to them the stereotype of technological and economic efficiency; and finally, the relationships between persons and the way of conducting them as essential components of the business policy and strategy. They concluded asserting that “... the human element and the environmental characteristics in which the firm operates become a prime object of analysis for any policy intervention” (Di Tommaso & Dubbini, 2000, p. 41).

In the light of these limitations, Stern (1996) has identified five areas where, in his view, the evaluation community has been forced to innovate, including:

- 1) The professionalization of evaluators: through the organization of evaluation societies and associations that have emphasized evaluation practice, the

concerns for evaluation quality and for evaluation standards that help in protecting evaluators from customer pressures.

- 2) The theory development: through the resurgence of interest in philosophies of science and in theory development, in specific in generic evaluation theories, e.g. programme theory, theories of action, and intervention (or action research) theory.
- 3) The use of new methods and techniques: through a renewed interest in qualitative methods that describe the processes and qualitative effects of evaluation which, as Stern (1996) highlights, are of basic importance to current economic development programmes.
- 4) The acquisition of new skills of engagement: due to the frequent politicized nature of multi-stakeholders programmes and the prominence of subjective, value-laden goals, the acquisition of new skills is encouraged, such as: negotiation; conflict management; protection of independence and impartiality; the acknowledgement of latent effects from the evaluation intervention; the support of organizational learning; and the utilization of evaluation results.
- 5) The justification of evaluators: evaluators are not only seen as data collectors that describe and explain a phenomenon but are urged to reflect on their need to make judgments and their warrant to do so. In this respect, there are different postures: the classical positivist approaches, where evaluation customers reserve the right to judge according to their own criteria or where evaluators are required to judge according to certain stated criteria; the naturalistic approaches where evaluators prefer not to assess but that programme participants tell their own stories and experiences; and other more pluralistic approaches, where programme stakeholders make their own judgments of the programme.

While the scheme presented by Stame (1999) is useful in acknowledging the importance of intangible factors in economic development, it is limited by only considering the relationship between the implementing agency and the beneficiary. In this sense, Stame's scheme fails to provide a more holistic approach that considers the different factors that may affect the relationship between programme stakeholders (e.g. their different interests, issues of power) and the areas that impact and affect programme evaluation (e.g. the role of the beneficiaries in the evaluation, the influence of the evaluator).

In addition to the recognition of the importance of intangible factors in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs, there is another debate related to entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur.

In the literature, it has been recognized that the entrepreneur has an important role in economic development (Deakins, 1999). There are, mainly, three traditions that notice the different aspects of the entrepreneur. First, the ‘Austrian School’ developed the concept that “the entrepreneur is seen as being crucial to economic development and a catalyst of dynamic change” (Deakins, 1999, p. 10). Writers of the Austrian School support much of the actual entrepreneur theories. For Kirzner, the entrepreneur could be anyone who is alert to trade opportunities (Deakins, 1999), emphasizing the ability to perceive profit opportunities and stressing the importance of competition (Wennekers & Thurik, 1999). Second, in the German tradition, for Schumpeter, the “entrepreneur is a special person ... an innovator (that) brings about change through the introduction of new technological processes of production” (Deakins, 1999, p. 11). This tradition draws attention to the creative ability of an innovative entrepreneur (Wennekers & Thurik, 1999). Finally, the neo-classical tradition points out that entrepreneurial activities lead markets to equilibrium (Wennekers & Thurik, 1999); in this sense, for Knight, the entrepreneur is someone that is prepared to take risks in an uncertain environment (Deakins, 1999).

These schools of thought about entrepreneurship identify certain characteristics of the entrepreneur’s personality, creating an intense debate. As noted by Deakins (1999) in trying to identify certain characteristics to certain individuals,

“... it is possible to argue that the supply of potential entrepreneurs is limited to a finite number of people with innate abilities, that they have a set of characteristics that mark them out as special... (leading) to some controversy and, in terms of policy, has significant implications... if entrepreneurial characteristics are inherent, then there is little to be gained from direct interventions to encourage new entrepreneurs to start new businesses, although interventions to improve the infrastructure or environment may still have an effect” (Deakins, 1999, p. 18).

In this controversy, others (Lundström & Stevenson, 2001; Wennekers & Thurik, 1999) acknowledged that entrepreneurship is related to individuals, their capabilities (traits)

and preferences (actions), but in addition, to cultural, economic, institutional and technological conditions that stimulate those individual traits and actions.

It has been argued that entrepreneurship¹⁴ is related to economic growth (Audretsch & Thurik, 2000; OECD, 2002; Wennekers & Thurik, 1999), and this has been one of the arguments of the importance of SMEs in different economies. Wennekers and Thurik (1999) have concluded that "... newness through start-ups and innovations as well as competition are the most relevant factors linking entrepreneurship with economic growth" (p. 34). In addition, Audretsch and Thurik (2000) showed empirical evidence that countries which focus on entrepreneurial policy rather than manager-oriented policy have had a reduction in unemployment (e.g. United States and United Kingdom).

The shift from a manager-oriented policy to an entrepreneurial policy that different governments and institutions have made highlights the need to differentiate between SME policy and policy oriented towards entrepreneurship (Lundström & Stevenson, 2001; OECD, 2000; Stevenson, 1996; Stevenson & Lundström, 2001). In this sense, Stevenson (1996) presented the case of the Canadian National Policy on Entrepreneurship, and specifically the Atlantic Canada Region case. In this case, the long term priority was to create more supportive conditions for entrepreneurship; while the short term objective was to encourage people with the necessary motivation, desire, ability and skills to start-up a business. Stevenson states, the aim was

"to develop a comprehensive strategy in entrepreneurship development (to encourage more people to start their own business) would necessitate more emphasis on creating awareness of the option, generating interest and desire, and then providing more opportunities and support for people to learn about the entrepreneurial process and develop the skills necessary to start and run successful enterprises of their own" (Stevenson, 1996, p. 21).

One of the main obstacles faced in this shift of regional development policy is related to the traditional paradigm where the main focus was oriented towards developing an economic infrastructure, carrying out macro-economic planning and evaluating

¹⁴ "Entrepreneurship is the manifest ability and willingness of individuals, on their own, in teams, within and outside existing organization, to:

- perceive and create new economic opportunities (new products, new production methods, new organizational schemes, and new product market combinations) and to
- introduce their ideas in the market, in the face of uncertainty and other obstacles, by making decisions on location, form and the use of resources and institutions" (Wennekers & Thurik, 1999, pp. 46-47).

investment projects. The shift implied a different approach to economic development, in which the main focus would be persons; “it is more about developing the human capacity within the community and meeting the non-financial needs of people who are starting small businesses” (Stevenson, 1996, p. 31) and therefore requires the consideration of intangible factors.

Taking into account the OECD’s (1997c) observation of a pattern in job creation, where the net job creation rate and employment volatility decline with the age of the business, “policy should focus less on small firms and more on young firms. Put differently, a policy in favour of SMEs would be replaced by a policy to promote entrepreneurship” (OECD, 1997c, p. 8). Similarly, Stevenson and Lundström (2001) acknowledged the relevance of human development, and particularly of the driving force behind the business (the entrepreneur), and proposed a shift towards an entrepreneurship policy that focuses on individuals and their behaviours instead of on enterprises.

Lundström and Stevenson (2001) provided a comparison of different characteristics between small business policy and entrepreneurship policy. Table 3.8 presents these differences in terms of the objective, target, targeting, client group, levers, focus, delivery system, approach, results orientation and consultation.

Table 3.8 A comparison of characteristics between small business versus entrepreneurship policy

| Feature | Small business policy | Entrepreneurship policy |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Objective | Firm growth, productivity | Motivate more new entrepreneurs |
| Target | Existing firms Businesses (entities) | Nascent entrepreneurs/new business starters Individuals (people) |
| Targeting | 'Pick winners' (i.e., growth sectors, firms) | General population/subsets (i.e., woman, youth) |
| Client group | Easy to identify 'existing' | Difficult to identify 'nascent' |
| Levers | Direct financial incentives (tax credit, loans, guarantees) | Non-financial, support (networks, education, counselling) |
| Focus | Favourable business environment (i.e., tax regime, reduce red tape) | Entrepreneurial culture/climate (i.e., promote entrepreneurship) |
| Delivery system | Well-established | Lots of new players (need orientation) |
| Approach | Generally passive | Pro-active outreach |
| Results orientation | More immediate (Results in less than 4 years) | More long term (Results can take longer) |
| Consultation | SME associations | Forums do not generally exist |

Source: Lundström and Stevenson (2001, p. 44).

The shift in policy orientation from enterprise to entrepreneurs implies a substitution of focus from the business to the individual. From providing support after the business is formed towards creating an entrepreneurial culture which could encourage people to start a business. From improving the financial environment by offering access to capital and financial incentives (e.g. tax reductions and export subsidies) towards a culture that encourages entrepreneurship through training, counselling and the development of networks and not making specific use of financial levers, except for micro-loans.

Although Lundström and Stevenson (2001) favoured a shift towards an entrepreneur policy, in terms of evaluation practice, their approach to evaluation remains confined to conventional practices of measuring and shows a strong reliance on determining indices and measures. For example, they noted that in the SME policy there are at least four levels of measurement:

- 1) The sector level, i.e., how well the SME sector is doing in terms of the net increases in the number/share of SMEs; growth of SME share of employment, etc.
- 2) The firm level, i.e., how well the individual firm is doing in terms of growth in productivity, sales.
- 3) The customer service level, i.e., how many clients have been served; how satisfied they are.
- 4) The programme level, i.e., the effectiveness of the programme in a cost-benefit basis.

While arguing for a shift from SME policy towards entrepreneur policy, Lundström and Stevenson (2001) also highlighted the tendency in measuring general entrepreneurship trends and entrepreneurship climate/culture. For measuring the entrepreneurial climate they made reference to indicators such as: “increases in the entrepreneurial potential of the population, increases in the preconditions for becoming an entrepreneur/decreases in obstacles, and changes in the social attitudes toward entrepreneurship” (pp. 144-145). Lundström and Stevenson (2001) noted that the following indicators have been used to measure the entrepreneurial climate: changes in entrepreneurial attitude; motivation level and intent to start a business; and entrepreneurial activity among women, youth, immigrants and academics. In a similar way, in the UK, the development in social attitudes towards entrepreneurship and the number of nascent entrepreneurs are considered as measures of the entrepreneurial climate.

As highlighted by Stame (1999) in focusing only on impact assessment, the process of evaluation is not taken into account; therefore, the outcomes of programme evaluation could be misinterpreted. She argued that results may be considered positive in terms of profitability but may not reflect the deficiencies of the programme. Or what may be considered a negative outcome in terms of profitability, may in fact contribute in the developmental learning process of the participant entrepreneurs. Similarly, Kumar (1995) argued that "... not all important factors, conditions, outputs, effects, and impacts of a program can be easily quantified. Information relating to staff morale, political environment, links with external institutions, factors affecting performance, and even economic externalities are very difficult to quantify" (Kumar, 1995, p. 88). Kumar continued by asserting that much of the information, frequently the most relevant, is lost in the process of quantification. In this sense, inquiring into the claims, concerns and issues of programme stakeholders represents a way of not losing information that cannot be quantified; and it also represents a way of considering in evaluation the perspective programme stakeholders have of the programme. Moreover, in concentrating on measures and overlooking what cannot be quantified, Kumar (1995) argued that a distorted picture may be provided. What this reflects is the need for complementing the actual way of evaluating programmes (where evaluation relies heavily on quantitative approaches) with more qualitative approaches to evaluation.

The analysis of programmes for SMEs' development cannot be isolated from the consideration of the policies defined in support of this sector. Therefore, the following section presents an overview of the policies and programmes oriented towards MSME development in Mexico.

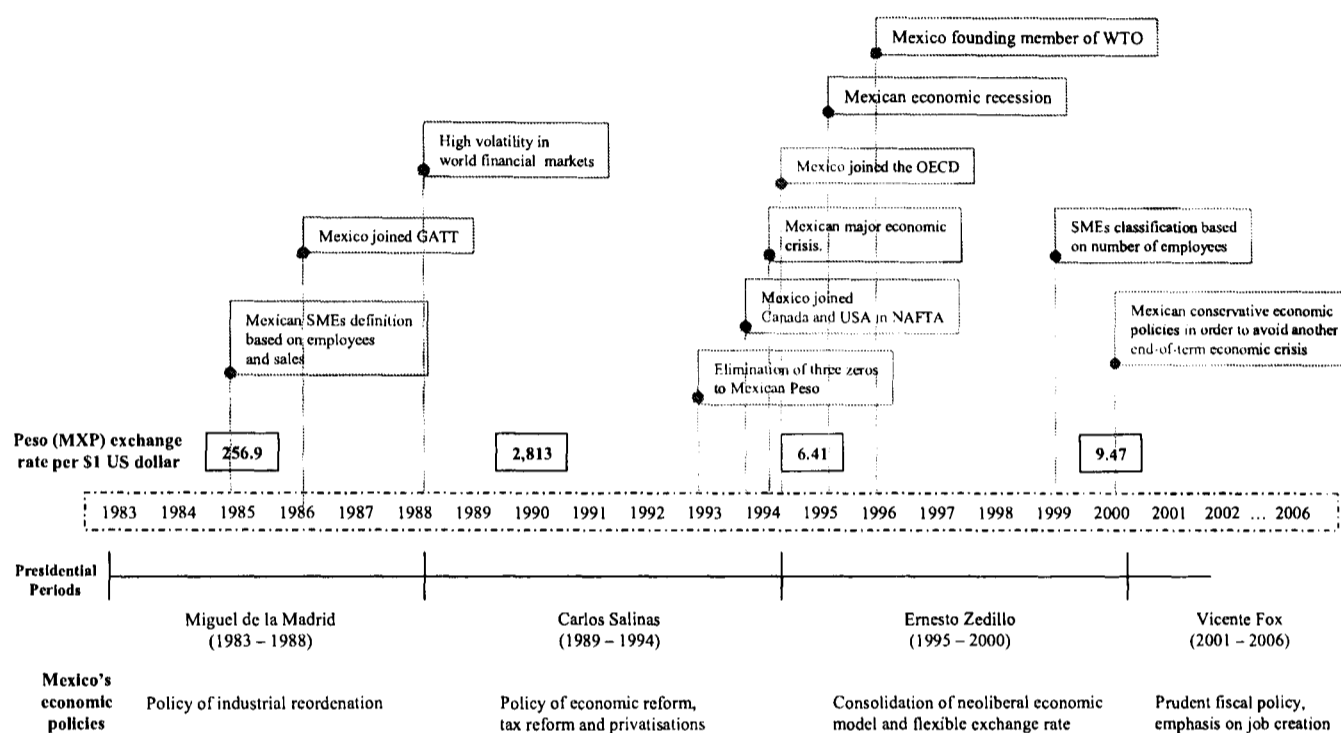
3.6 Policies and programmes for MSMEs' development: The case of Mexico

In Mexico, at the beginning of the 1980s, industrial modernization and commercial opening were accorded singular importance. Economic changes included the reorganization of financial and banking markets; the reorganization of external debt; the

entrance of Mexico to GATT/WTO¹⁵; participation in the NAFTA¹⁶ and the entrance of Mexico to the OECD.¹⁷ The economic reorganization required from all organizations operating in Mexico, world class standards in quality, efficiency and productivity.

Figure 3.1 shows the evolution of the Mexican economy, while the following paragraphs describe the implications for MSMEs.

Figure 3.1 Internal and External Shocks to Mexico's Economy and Policy



After the following online Sources (Consulted 2001, October 29):
http://www.exchangerate.com/country_info.html?cont=All&cid=150
http://www.sedesol.gob.mx/perfiles/nacional/english/03_history.html
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/bgn/index.cfm?docid=1838>
<http://www.apccsec.org.sg/member/memberecreport/mex.html>
<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/data/mex/mex580.asp>
<http://www.ica.org/about/nmclaoc.htm>

During the tenure of President Miguel de la Madrid (1983 to 1988), the National Development Plan proposed, for the industrial sector, the promotion and consolidation of a solid national entrepreneurial workforce that would be able to respond to the changes of the economy (De la Madrid, 1983). In 1985, the Integral Small and Medium Development Industry Programme was approved through a presidential decree, and for the first time the small business was defined officially and the Ministry of Trade and

¹⁵ GATT General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which later became the WTO World Trade Organisation

¹⁶ NAFTA North America Free Trade Agreement

¹⁷ OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Industry (SECOFI) was in charge of the programme application. The project of industrial reorientation and modernization proved to be important for social and economic development and President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, during his tenure, continued it (Salinas de Gortari, 1989).

Although economic development started to bring results, in December 1994, at the beginning of President Ernesto Zedillo's tenure, an economic crisis caused many MSMEs to stop operating. The economic difficulties faced by the country and the increase of unemployment made the government realise the need for establishing measures that could promote business and SMEs (Rueda, 2001). In 1995 the National Counsel for Micro, Small and Medium size businesses was created with the aim of designing and coordinating aid programmes to increase SMEs' productivity; promoting integral and specialised consultancy and stimulating links and association of SMEs with big businesses. Policies for each sector were defined as a strategy in the National Development Plan 1995-2000 (Zedillo, 1995) in order to promote economic growth. The policies per sector offered a framework for the country's industrial development, with great emphasis on micro, small and medium business promotion. In summary, the Industrial Policy and Foreign Trade Programme presented an outline of Mexican industrial policies. It defined the industrial development strategy through the improvement of technological infrastructure, through the promotion of Mexican industrial competitiveness, and through the recognition of the important role of micro, small and medium size enterprises in the country's economic development (PROPICE, 1996).

In addition to the economic policy changes, Mexico also faced a change in political structure. After 71 years of single-party government (PRI¹⁸), an opposition party (PAN¹⁹) won the presidential elections, and many economic policies were revived.

During President Fox's tenure, the industrial policy seeks to promote MSME development especially through training and financial aid. In this sense the trends are:

¹⁸ Partido Revolucionario Institucional [Institucional Revolutionary Party] a centre-left wing party.

¹⁹ Partido Acción Nacional [Nacional Action Party] right-wing party.

“A policy oriented towards a financial system fortification and human resources formation. Microeconomic policies oriented towards the increment of local industry competitiveness and to facilitate micro, small and medium businesses internationalisation. Having as priority the following programmes:

- a) the development of a transformation bank;
- b) an alternative financial system through which small and medium business can have access to economic resources;
- c) productive chains reorganisation, which could allow exportation to other sectors and local productive chains reinforcement;
- d) to promote small and medium businesses internationalisation through credit access and technical assistance in order to improve its administration and marketing; and
- e) a work training programme which could allow business productivity improvement” (Fox, 1999, 2000).

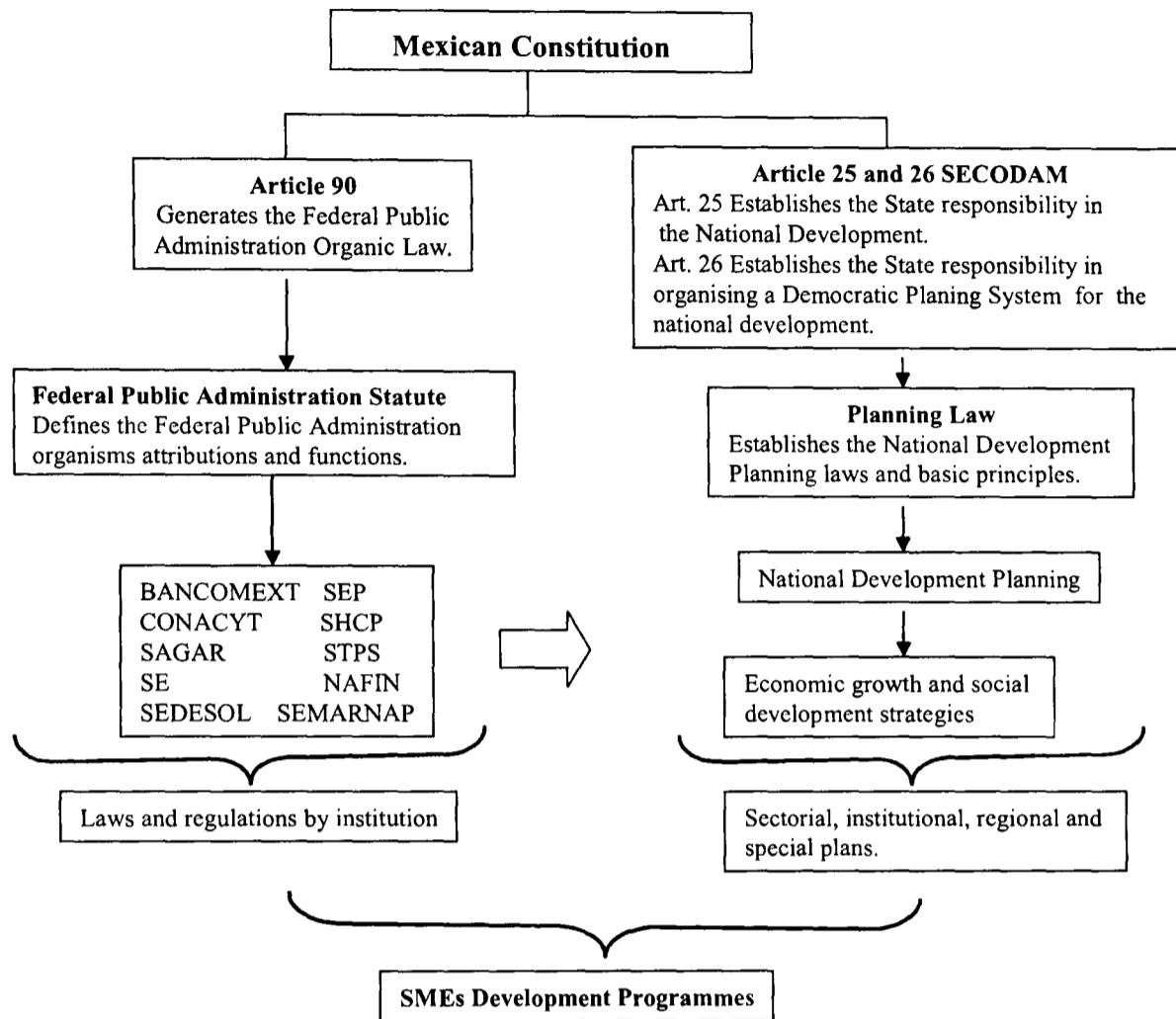
Broadly speaking, in the last twenty years Mexico has changed politically and economically. Policies and programmes for MSME development evolved, from the acknowledgement of SMEs through its first definition in 1985, to the formulation of specific industrial policies that focus its attention on MSME development.

The actual policies for MSMEs development have encouraged the creation of different programmes for MSMEs. The following Secretariats and public organizations offer programmes for MSMEs:

1. BANCOMEXT - National Bank for External Commerce;
2. CONACYT - National Council for Science and Technology;
3. SAGAR - Secretariat of Agriculture;
4. SEDESOL - Secretariat of Social Development;
5. SE - Secretariat of Economy;
6. SEMARNAP - Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources;
7. SEP - Secretariat of Public Education;
8. SHCP - Secretariat of Inland Revenue;
9. STPS - Secretariat of Work and Social Security; and
10. NAFIN - National Bank of Development;

Figure 3.2 shows the relationship of the different public organizations that support programmes for MSME development, and its legal framework.

Figure 3.2 Federal Government Planning Diagram for SMEs Development



Source: Secretaría de Economía (2000b, my translation)

As indicated by Figure 3.2, all public organizations must work within the framework of laws and regulations that, in co-ordination with sectorial, institutional, regional and special plans lead to MSME development programmes. According to the Secretariat of Economy, there are 131 programmes for MSMEs. Of these, the Federal Government²⁰ supports 33 programmes, while the States' Governments support the rest (Secretaría de Economía, 2000d).

²⁰ Mexico has a federal governmental structure which involves an executive (represented by the President), a legislative (Senate) and justice branches. It is organized in 31 states and a Federal District (Mexico City). "From an administrative viewpoint, Mexico's federal government is structured in a centralized system known as the Federal Public Administration ... composed of eighteen Secretariats or organisms (*Secretarías de Estado*), the Presidential Cabinet is highly specialized and enforces all federal legislative enactments throughout the Republic of Mexico as part of the Executive Power in the specific fields of their administrative jurisdiction" (Vargas, 2004, section 4, para. 3-4).

Table 3.9 shows some of the programmes that the federal government supports through seven public organizations.

Table 3.9 Development programmes offered by federal organizations

| Federal Organism | Programme | Description |
|------------------|--|---|
| BANCOMEXT | 1.Export guidance system | Specialised orientation and information services relating to foreign trade. |
| | 2.Promotion services | International promotion services, including registration of exporters data bases, and market research development. |
| | 3.Training services | Managers training programmes in issues related to foreign trade. |
| | 4.Mexico exports | Training and technical assistance to develop export projects. |
| | 5.Exporters national orientation service assistance | Advisory systems for exportation requirements evaluation and technical assistance to fulfil exportation requirements. |
| | 6.Technical assistance programme and image improvement (PAT) | Production process improvement, fulfilment of international certifications and norms and image improvement programmes to increase Mexican products quality and competitiveness. |
| | 7.Export sales credits | Export encouragement credits. |
| | 8.Credit letters and guarantee programmes | Financial services to encourage exports. |
| | 9.Supplier development programme | Financial services and credits to encourage importation substitution by suppliers. |
| | 10.Capital risks | Capital risks to increase business capitalisation. |
| CONACYT | 1.SEP-CONACYT system technological centres | Specific sector advisory and training services. |
| | 2.Integral regional research systems SEP-CONACYT | Technical assistance to businesses interested in applying research projects findings and technical development. |
| SE | 1.Diffusion of commercial practices | Information service regarding commercial practices current normativity. |
| | 2.National Quality Award (PNC) | Created by presidential decree in 1986 to recognise and stimulate Mexican business quality levels. |
| | 3.National quality programme | Mexican official and current norms information service. |
| | 4.Mexican business information system (SIEM) | Internet information system to offer businesses information in commerce opportunities and current assistance programmes availability. |
| | 5.Exporters national orientation service (SNOE) | Basic export procedures assistance. |
| | 6.National Committee for Productivity and Technological Innovation (COMPITE) | Technical assistance to improve non automated production lines in manufacture business. |
| | 7.CETRO-CRECE network | Administrative subjects business consultancy and technical assistance. |
| | 8.Suppliers development | Business meetings to promote relations between big and smaller size suppliers. Programme coordinated by NAFIN and BANCOMEXT. |
| | 9.Integrating firms programme | Promotion and advisory services to encourage integrative businesses formation. |
| SEP | 1.Work place training | Labour training with the assistance of the technological institutions. |
| | 2.Management and labour training | Management and labour training offered in coordination with STPS. |
| | 3.Technological development and research. | Technology generation, application and modification technical assistance. |
| SHCP | 1.Contributors assistance service | Information about fiscal issues current normativity. |
| STPS | 1.Modernisation and integral quality (CIMO) | Economic aid to carry out labour training programmes. |
| NAFIN | 1.Training programme | Entrepreneurial culture encouragement through training, in order to diminish credit risks. |
| | 2.First level credits | Direct credits to finance long term projects. |
| | 3.Fixed rate credits | Plan to provide fixed rate credits in order that SMEs can meet their credit obligations requirements. |
| | 4.Foreign trade financial services | Financial services to encourage foreign trade. |
| | 5.Suppliers development programme | Financial credits and services to encourage commercial relations between big business and smaller suppliers. |

Source: Modified from Secretaría de Economía (2000a, my translation)

Table 3.9 shows the variety of development programmes for MSMEs offered by several organizations. Rueda (2001) argues that there is some overlap of the programmes that different agencies offer. According to Neck (1987) this is a common problem worldwide, since most institutions are capable of providing a wide range of services.

An analysis of Table 3.9 shows that programmes for MSMEs are directed to provide information services, technical assistance and training. To a lesser extent they provide financial resources and special services. Table 3.10 groups the various programmes offered by Federal Organism (presented in Table 3.9) according to their main objective.

Table 3.10 Main objective of development programmes

| Federal Organism | Information/ Service | Technical assistance Training | Service and Training | Financial | Special |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| BANCOMEXT | 1,2 | 3,4 | 5 | 7,8,9,10 | 6 |
| CONACYT | | 2 | 1 | | |
| SE | 1,3,4,9 | 5,6 | 7 | | 2,8 |
| SEP | | 1,2,3 | | | |
| SHCP | 1 | | | | |
| STPS | | | | 1 | |
| NAFIN | | 1 | | 2,3,4,5 | |

Source: The author

As indicated by Table 3.10, the information, training and technical assistance services are oriented towards developing the entrepreneur managerial capacities; employees' development and business improvement are noted to be the focus of the programmes presented. Of the programmes presented in Table 3.9, only nine focus on financial support. In a similar way, OECD (2000) notes in an analysis of Mexican MSMEs policies and programmes, that they are heavily oriented towards intangible aspects, focusing on services such as information, consultancy and counselling. The following section describes how programmes for MSMEs have been evaluated in Mexico.

3.6.1 Evaluation of programmes for MSMEs in Mexico

The purpose of this section is to explore the way programmes for MSMEs have been evaluated in Mexico. The evaluations of programmes for MSMEs in Mexico reflect a

commitment to the first three generations of evaluation discussed in the last chapter. In order to make the case for a more participatory approach to evaluation, the problems that traditional evaluations face are presented in this section.

In *The Small and Medium Enterprise Outlook*, OECD (2000) makes reference to the evaluation framework that has been used to evaluate some SME programmes; this framework is much in accordance with that developed by the European Commission (2001). As mentioned in the previous chapter, OECD (2000) suggests the use of different tools and approaches of evaluation considering five key areas:

- *Appropriateness* in making reference to identified market failures.
- *Superiority* in comparison to other programmes or instruments addressing the same goals.
- *Systemic efficiency* in reference to the overall government context, considering interaction with and dependence on other programmes.
- *Own efficiency* in relation to the cost-effectiveness of the programme.
- *Adaptive efficiency* in providing feedback of evaluation results into programme, implementation and policy design.

OECD (2002) acknowledges that these five areas have been used to evaluate programmes successfully in various countries, for example:

- In Canada, evaluating the Canada Community Investment Plan (CCIP) programme.
- In the United Kingdom, evaluating the Business Links programme (BL).
- In Australia, evaluating the Small Business Incubator programme (SBIP).
- In France, evaluating the ANVAR Innovation Support programme.
- In Germany, evaluating Venture Capital for Small Technology Companies - BTU.
- In Italy, evaluating the Startech programme.

For example, the methodology used to evaluate CCIP considered the effectiveness of the programme in achieving its programme objectives (CCIP, 2000). The evaluation of

the BL programme was designed in accordance with the guidelines from DTI and DfEE²¹ on impact assessment, and took account of OECD’s appropriateness and efficiency criteria (Public and Corporate Economic Consultants/PACEC, 1999; ES Central Evaluation Team, 2000). The evaluation of the ANVAR programme used the following OECD criteria: superiority, through an international performance benchmarking; relevance; systemic efficiency, considering the coherence of the programme and the criterion of the programme own efficiency (De Laat, Warta & Williams, 2001).

In an earlier set of recommendations in relation to evaluation, OECD (1997b) highlighted the need for evaluation to be user-oriented,²² (i.e. considering the information needs of different “clients”). However, the user-oriented evaluation framework of OECD could be questioned because its framework is limited to considering the programme efficiency in a set of established areas (appropriateness, superiority, systematic efficiency, own efficiency and adaptive efficiency), and it is not clear where clients’ views could fit in an approach that rests its efforts on quantifiable measures. However, it is important to acknowledge that different people are interested in different issues when doing evaluation (OECD, 2000; Polt, 1997). For example, policy makers are concerned that evaluation examines the policy or programme justification, that it considers its economic effects and informs resource allocation. Those in charge of programme management are interested in internal programme efficiencies, with the objective of improving the quality, responsiveness and delivery of the programme (OECD, 2000). In addition, it should be noted that, while it is acknowledged that there are a variety of tools used in programme evaluation, such as cost-benefit analysis, economic impact analysis, micro-level econometric analysis, peer review, surveys of programme participants and case studies, only few of them are used in practice (Capron & van Pottelsberghe, 1997).

²¹ Department for Education and Employment.

²² Making reference to the need that evaluation “address the information needs of the respective ‘clients’ (policy-makers, firms, program administrators on various levels)” (Stamper, Fritz & Hutschenreiter, 1997, p. 9)

In the case of Mexico, The Secretariat of Economy, through a special commission (CIPI)²³ evaluated 13 of 20 programmes for MSMEs in areas such as training, consultancy and technical assistance (Secretaría de Economía, 2000d).

CIPI (Secretaría de Economía, 2000d) recognized that during 1999 only 1.84% of all micro, small and medium size businesses in Mexico took advantage of the available programmes. Of those enterprises that used the programmes, 86% were micro, 10% were small and 4% were medium sized.

CIMO, the modernization and integral quality programme of the STPS, was the one that the majority of the MSMEs attended (87%). CIPI also found out that 43% of the available programmes were used by enterprises in the manufacturing sector, while enterprises in the commerce and service sectors only used 13% and 15% respectively. CIPI recognized after this evaluation that, in order to apply an enterprise promotion policy efficiently, two fundamental aspects of MSME support and development programmes need to be addressed:

- “-The lack of an appropriate micro, small and medium size business national support planning process.
 - The need to evaluate and improve the existing development programmes for SMEs”
- (Secretaría de Economía, 2000d, p. 31).

While analysing the evaluation system for continuous improvement, CIPI found that only some programmes, like CETRO-CRECE, COMPITE and CIMO, had evaluated their performance. The majority of the programmes analysed did not have, or had limited, impact and performance indicators, reflecting the lack of an evaluation system that could give an integral, periodic and reliable support for planning and assigning resources. As a result, CIPI concluded that a challenge for programmes is to fortify their evaluation and coordination capacity through the following strategies:

- The establishment of a specialised unit that could support SMEs national planning process.

²³ Comisión Intersecretarial de Política Industrial [Inter-secretariat Commission for Policy-making]

-The establishment of a unit that could define the basis for an integral evaluation system, applicable to all programmes, in order to establish continuous improvement mechanisms.

-The establishment of mechanisms which consider the outcomes of the evaluation of programmes in order to assign resources more effectively (Secretaría de Economía, 2000d).

Although the analysis presented by CIPI (Secretaría de Economía, 2000d) is important, it overemphasizes indicators and measuring factors to evaluate programmes for MSMEs. Even though the need of evaluation is highlighted, it can be inferred that the same tendency to evaluate, based on quantifiable factors, may continue due to the significant amount of money that the government invests in these programmes. For example, during 1999, the CIMO, CRECE and PMT programmes received in total a budget near to 660 million pesos (approximately £36,185,202.45 -exchange rate MXN\$18.2395 per pound). This amount represents almost a quarter of the Secretariat of Economy's total budget (2,599 million pesos - £142,492,921) (Secretaría de Economía, 2000d). The amount of resources assigned raises concerns about programme expenditure and outcomes. Therefore, the Government is interested on evaluating the results of programmes, and quantitative evaluation approaches are more likely to be used (CIPI-Banco Mundial, 1999; Gibb, 1990a). The recent interest of the Mexican government in evaluation is of particular importance to this research. In this regard, the creation of the National Institute of Educative Evaluation (INEE) was announced in 2002 through a presidential decree (Reyes & Jimenez, 2002). Also, an independent Office of Programme Evaluation (OEP) is expected to be opened by 2005 (CIPI-Banco Mundial, 1999).

The Entrepreneurial Development Programme 2001-2006 presented the evaluation system for programmes oriented towards entrepreneurial development (Fox, 2001). This evaluation system consists of five main strategies:

1. The definition of a system of strategic indicators that could encourage programme performance evaluations.
2. The design of appropriate and adequate control mechanisms.
3. The creation of coordination and participation mechanisms for evaluation.

4. Accountability and information presented in a periodic basis.
5. The establishment of a continuous improvement system in order to correct possible deficiencies and deviations of each programme.

According to the National Indicator System,²⁴ each governmental dependency has to define the indicators that show programme achievements and allow a continuous improvement process. Table 3.11 shows the indicators that should be considered in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs.

Table 3.11 Indicators for the evaluation of MSMEs programmes

| Indicator | Description |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Entrepreneurial Development | Evaluates the effects of business performance due to the support received. e.g. Exports average increment attributable to programme support. |
| Impact | Evaluates the results according to objectives' fulfilment. e.g. Number of businesses that achieve their objective among the total attended. |
| Coverage | Evaluates the amount of business served from the total population. e.g. Number of businesses served among the programme's population objective. |
| Efficiency | Evaluates the utilisation of resources. e.g. Programme management costs among the programme assigned resources. |
| Self-sufficiency | Evaluates the level of programme financial self-sufficiency. e.g. Incomes by own resources among the total costs of the programme. |
| Quality | Evaluates the users' satisfaction. e.g. Number of clients satisfied with the service provided by the programme. |
| Environmental | Evaluates the improvement of the efficient use of material and energetic resources, as well as the reduction of emissions and waste of businesses that benefited from the programme. e.g. percentage of businesses that reduce emissions among the supported businesses |

Source: Fox (2001, p.81, my translation)

According to OECD (2000), although the majority of the Mexican programmes for MSMEs are oriented towards intangible factors, the majority of their evaluation

²⁴ Defined in the National Development Plan 2001-2006 (Fox, 2001).

indicators are oriented towards measuring the effects of the programmes, for example: the increment in exportations attributable to the aid received, the number of business attended by the programme, and the number of businesses satisfied; therefore, concentrating on tangible and measurable factors. In using these types of indicators there is no room for a real continuous improvement strategy that promotes understanding of the reasons behind the achievements or lack of achievements of each programme.

The following are some of the Mexican programmes considered in the report of *Evaluation of SME Policies and Programmes* carried out by OECD (2000).

-The COMPITE programme aims to increase SMEs productivity and profitability, to improve production processes, and to achieve competitive prices and quality control standards. The success of the programme has been evaluated based on increases in productivity and the comments of workshop attendees.

-The CETRO-CRECE²⁵ programme aims to increase the profitability and competitiveness of SMEs through counselling services. Various indicators are used to evaluate the success of the programme, such as: “increased sales or operation profits of assisted SMEs; increases or stabilisation in job numbers of assisted SMEs; increases in the ‘feasibility grade’ of assisted SMEs; increase in operation profits of SMEs divided by the operational costs of CRECE” (OECD, 2000, p. 151).

-The Supplier Development Programme aims to integrate SMEs into productive, commercial and/or service chains with large enterprises established in Mexico. The results of the programme are measured considering several indicators, such as number of participating firms (large and SMEs); number of interviews carried out; number of business deals and number of potential businesses.

OECD (2000) notes that there are several programmes that have not yet been formally evaluated, but indicators of the success of the programme have been identified as a way of reporting, for example:

²⁵ Regional Centre for Entrepreneurial Competitiveness.

-The SIEM²⁶ programme provides on-line information about programmes for SMEs that the Government supports. For example: free online business promotion and tools for businesses. Although a formal evaluation has not been carried out, success indicators include the number of enterprises registered, number of programmes promoted by SIEM and number of visits to the SIEM Web site.

-The programme of Promotion of Thematic Self-Diagnoses for Industry (self evaluation) provides entrepreneurs with an online tool to assess management skills and other business areas. The results of the programme are measured by the number of self evaluations completed, and by theme within the programme system.

-The Integrating Firms Programme aims to promote collaboration among SMEs through fiscal and counselling services, and to encourage joint activities such as production processes, buying and commercialisation. The results of the programme are measured by “the number of integrating firms established; measurable benefits to SME for participating in an integrating firm (sales increases, costs reductions, etc.)” (OECD, 2000, p. 155).

OECD (2000) points out that there are programmes with no agreed methodology to evaluate their outcomes, for example:

-The Business Opportunities Network Programme aims to use the Internet for making links between SMEs, by offering access to a network of business opportunities. The programme results are measured according to the number of Internet consultations.

-The Export Guidance System Programme provides free personalised advice and information services about foreign trade and does not have a defined evaluation methodology.

²⁶ Mexican Entrepreneurial Information System.

The evaluations of the programmes presented above are strongly influenced by traditional evaluation practices. They try to quantify and measure the outcomes of the programmes in several ways. Considering the evolution of evaluation presented in the previous chapter, it could be said that, in the case of Mexico, the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs is confined to the first, second and third generations, due to the interest in having external evaluations oriented towards measuring and judging the programmes on the basis of tangible factors. In spite of the frequent benchmarking carried out in order to identify best practices and tendencies in MSME policy and practice and in programme evaluation, there is still no sign that reflects the trend towards more pluralistic approaches in evaluation (Carpintero, 1998; CIPI-Banco Mundial, 1999; Espinosa, 1993; Irigoyen & Puebla, 1997; Skertchly, 2000). Perhaps this delay could be related to the time that the SME sector has been of interest to different governments; to the early acknowledgment of the importance of the sector and to the experience and exercise of programme evaluation.

As indicated previously, one of the aims of this research project is to introduce a more appropriate evaluation approach for programmes for Mexican MSMEs. Therefore it is important to explore the methodological problems that different approaches of evaluation face. The following section discusses these problems.

3.7 Methodological problems related to the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs

It could be argued that, in general, evaluations of programmes for MSMEs have been influenced by the scientific paradigm, which relies upon measuring in order to judge the value of what is being evaluated. For example:

- Storey (1998) in developing a methodology for evaluating the impact of public policies to support the small business sector emphasised “... the impossibility of conducting an evaluation in the absence of clearly specified objectives for the policy concerned ... (arguing that) ... in fact, these objectives should be specified in a quantitative manner in the form of targets” (p. 2).

- Lundström and Stevenson (2001) noted the evaluation and measurement difficulties because of deficiencies on expressing quantifiable objectives before the introduction of the programme.
- Kumar (1995) noted the differences that existed in conceptualizing “results” in the context of the programme oriented towards performance measurement and in the context of the development community. As an example, he noted that

“the term ‘results’ in the context of U.S. domestic programs usually refers to the immediate outputs of ongoing program, for example, the decline in the cost of waste disposal as a result of privatization. The development community tends to go beyond such a short-term view of results by focusing on second- and even third-generation results” (Kumar, 1995, p. 85).

In explaining the development community’s view, frequently used in policy evaluation (Howlett & Ramesh, 1995), Kumar presents the causal logic beneath development programmes, shown in Figure 3.3:

Figure 3.3 Causal logic beneath development programmes

Inputs → outputs → effects → impacts

Source: Kumar (1995, p. 85)

In this sense, Kumar (1995) explained that *inputs* of human and material resources expended on development programmes could produce immediate *outputs*, for example, a programme that finances the purchase of new machinery. The outputs contribute to intermediate outcomes, frequently named *effects*, for example, the increment of the business productivity. And the *impacts* refer to the long-term outcomes, to the results of the development programme on the people, the economy, society or the environment.

Problems such as the absence of clear objectives, the difficulties in expressing the objectives in quantifiable measures and the differences between short-term and long-term results of programmes have prompted an interest in differentiating between direct and indirect effects of a programme.

OECD (2000) highlighted the tendency of programme evaluation to elaborate techniques and methodologies that measure the direct and indirect effect of a programme and its implementation. The real power of those techniques and methodologies to measure the effects (direct and indirect) of those programmes is a question that has not been answered clearly. It should be taken into account that whichever approach is taken to do an evaluation and techniques and methods are used, there are always problems to be faced.

For example, OECD (1999) noted the conflicts of choosing evaluation criteria when intended programme objectives are multiple, not clear, disclosed, developing or even conflicting. Another problem refers to deciding what is to be the focus of the evaluation: on whether the programme objectives are achieved, or taking a more holistic approach that considers all the programme effects, with its added burdens of complexity and time-consumption.

The OECD (1999) mentioned the difficulties in choosing evaluation methods due to the fact that different techniques to collect and analyse data could provide different results. The problem of establishing conclusive evidence of cause-effect relationships is also noted, since it is difficult to control all the variables that may be involved in the outcomes of the programme. For example, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) (2001) prepared a report in assessing the SBA's progress in achieving certain outcomes and they highlighted the difficulties in "... assessing SBA's progress for this outcome (small business self-reliance and success in the competitive market) because SBA continues to use output measures without showing how strategies and measures relate to helping business succeed" (p. 5).

With reference to specific evaluation tools, to determine the cost-benefit of a programme, it has been recognized that the difficulties faced are related to identifying the costs and benefits of all the objectives (OECD, 2002). There are also disadvantages faced when factors are susceptible to arbitrary decisions (Capron & van Pottelsberghe, 1997). In relation to micro-level econometric analysis, Polt (1997) recognized that this technique has recently been developed as an evaluation methodology concerned with the use of "econometric techniques based on longitudinal micro-level data, where the impacts of programmes are examined by comparing the performance characteristics of

firms that are clients of government initiatives ... with those of non-client firms” (p. 6). The disadvantage of this tool rests in the difficulty of controlling firm characteristics other than programme participation; in addition to the consideration that it is one of the steps of a full cost-benefit analysis that should also consider the social benefit against the total costs (Polt, 1997).

It has been argued that a combination of evaluation approaches (quantitative and qualitative) is needed in order to capture all the aspects of the evaluation process (OECD, 1999; Polt, 1997). Polt argued that quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluation are complementary and not mutually exclusive.

Similarly, in small business research, many researchers have employed a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach to take advantage of their individual and combined benefits. However, as Curran and Blackburn (2001) pointed out, it is only in very recent years that qualitative forms of analysis have enjoyed increasing popularity among small business researchers. The quantitative approach seems to identify general patterns and to provide possible explanations of them; generating an overall picture using hard and reliable data on the nature, scope and impact of prevailing trends (Bryman, 1988). However, it failed to consider the heterogeneity of MSME sector (Curran & Blackburn, 2001; Devins, 1999). Consequently, we cannot simply rely upon a quantitative perspective if we really want to know about the problems that SMEs face. In this sense, qualitative research has been used to look at the general and particular effects of what is taking place through the eyes of the respondents in their particular context and in relation to real-life processes (Bryman, 1988).

3.8 Conclusion

The previous chapter presented an analysis of evaluation theory, considering the different generations of evaluation; from its origins where the main concerns were focused on measuring, describing and judging, to a responsive constructivist generation, where the claims, concerns and issues of programme stakeholders become the organizers of the evaluation. In the previous chapter, it was also acknowledged that conventional approaches towards evaluation have been severely criticised (e.g. Guba &

Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, 1991 and Collins, 1996) on the basis that they are not appropriate to deal with social-behaviour inquiry and, therefore, a shift towards qualitative approaches has been proposed.

This chapter analysed how programmes for MSMEs have been evaluated. It started with a general perspective presenting different definitions of MSMEs and some of the factors used to define them, such as number of employees, sales turnover, and qualitative criteria. The chapter stressed the importance that MSMEs have for national economies, in terms of the amount of MSMEs, their contribution to workforce generation and their contribution to GDP. In the Mexican economy, they represent approximately 99.5% of the total registered businesses; they employ 60% of the workforce, and generate 40% of the GDP (INEGI, 2001).²⁷

An account was given of governmental programmes offered to support MSMEs. Different institutions have different programmes aiming to support MSMEs in different areas, such as information services, consultancy, financing, training and technical assistance. The chapter also presented new perspectives in economic development that influenced the trends of policy and evaluation. These new perspectives consider that intangible factors in evaluation represent and a shift from a MSME policy towards an entrepreneur policy.

It was shown that in Mexico, programmes for MSME development are heavily oriented towards intangible factors, focusing on information services, consultancy and training. The chapter identified the way programmes for MSMEs have been evaluated in Mexico. It was concluded that programmes in Mexico are evaluated through a traditional approach because they are concerned with quantifying and measuring outcomes.

Given the difficulties faced by traditional evaluation, and given the trends and needs of innovating in evaluation, this research explores a way of complementing the traditional approach to evaluate MSME programmes in Mexico in order to present a better picture. The importance of conventional evaluation approaches is acknowledged, and a great amount of resources is invested by the government in programmes to develop MSMEs.

²⁷ Information from 1998.

However, a more holistic view is needed of the relationship between the provider and the beneficiary. It is thought that limiting the approach to evaluate programmes for MSMEs by not considering intangible factors, by not involving the people in the process of evaluation and by not promoting their participation also limits our understanding; and, what is more important, limits the capability of the different stakeholders of understanding and improving the programme.

This realisation, combined with the limitations of traditional approaches to evaluate MSMEs programmes, the needs of innovation in evaluation, identified previously, and the potential of small business research to influence policy-making (Curran & Blackburn, 2001) have guided this research. This research aims to build upon the importance of considering intangible factors in programme evaluation, and in particular on MSME programme evaluation. Therefore, the following chapter focuses on developing an evaluation approach, considering intangible factors, that provides a guide to a practical participatory approach to the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs, where stakeholders' perceptions of the programme can be considered in order to improve the programme.

Chapter 4. The development of a situationally responsive practical participatory evaluation (SRPPE) approach to evaluate programmes for MSMEs

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters presented the grounds and evolution of evaluation theory and how the generations of evaluation are reflected in MSME programme evaluation. Traditional evaluation approaches tend to quantify and measure programme outcomes and they focus on programme tangible factors. However, the underestimation of intangible factors often blocks programme improvement. Therefore this research seeks to close that gap by suggesting a complement to the way MSME programmes have been evaluated, focusing on intangible factors. Similar developments have been noted in “new economics” where in spite of a focus on resource allocation efficiencies, considerations of knowledge transfer, use and the networks by which transfer takes place have been included as a new way of thinking about how to value science beyond attempts to monetarize the value of the knowledge produced (Georghiou & Roessner, 2000).

This research proposes a formative (worth) type of evaluation, in the sense that it intends not to judge the programme but to seek ways of improving it by considering the programme particular context (as explained in section 2.2). The Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach to evaluating programmes for MSMEs is organized around the claims, concerns and issues (CC&I) of programme stakeholders. In this sense, this research seeks to contribute to the development of empirical research that addresses intangible factors in evaluation by focusing on stakeholders’ CC&I through the use of nominal group techniques and focus groups.

This chapter presents the process followed in Fourth Generation Evaluation and in Utilization-focused Evaluation. This research seeks the accommodation of Fourth Generation Evaluation and Utilization-focused Evaluation; therefore, this chapter notes the aspects these evaluation approaches have in common and the aspects in which they

differ and presents the Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach advocated in this research. The focus then turns to analysis of the components of the SRPPE approach, with the aim of providing an overview of the components that form the evaluation approach, and assisting in understanding and analysing the interventions carried out in this research (explained in Chapter Six and reported in Chapter Seven). The SRPPE approach developed in this chapter is informed by the CC&I of the programme stakeholders. The SRPPE approach considers, as part of the process of evaluation, four components: (1) the decision-making component; (2) the political component; (3) the learning component and (4) the evaluators' characteristic component. Finally, the SRPPE approach considers as part of the outcomes of the process three uses of evaluation: conceptual use, symbolic use and instrumental use.

4.2 Fourth Generation Evaluation & Utilization-focused Evaluation

Guba and Lincoln (1989) regard their Fourth Generation Evaluation approach as responsive constructivist evaluation. In this sense, the evaluation is organized by stakeholders' CC&I and uses the methodology of the constructivist paradigm. Guba and Lincoln detail in 12 steps the process involved in their dialectic process. These 12 steps can be summarised in 4 key areas as:

1. Initiating the contact and organizing the evaluation.
2. Identifying and involving programme stakeholders in the evaluation, focusing on their CC&I.
3. Negotiating the stakeholders' CC&I seeking consensus.
4. Reporting using case study and repeating the process.

The steps of Fourth Generation Evaluation are by no means sequential in the sense that one follows another; in contrast, they follow a flexible process where "...back and forth movement, sometimes involving jumps over multiples steps, is not only possible but desirable" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 185).

Patton's Utilization-focused Evaluation approach is intended at focusing on intended use by intended users. The different stages of Utilization-focused Evaluation are summarised as following:

1. Identification of intended users of the evaluation.²⁸
2. Definition of the intended use of the evaluation and its focus by evaluator and intended users.
3. Definition of the methods and design of the evaluation to collect the information
4. Involvement of intended users in the interpretation of the collected data and generation of recommendations.
5. Decisions of dissemination of the evaluation.

Utilization-focused evaluation approach is oriented towards decision making, emphasising the production of useful information for intended users of the evaluation. As noted by Greene (1998), Patton's approach combines several methodological approaches to organize the evaluation according to the needs of the intended users.

Chapter Two pointed out the concerns expressed by some theorists that Fourth Generation Evaluation is too theoretical, separated from actual evaluation practice (Pitman & Maxwell, 1992). Therefore, it was noted that the evaluation approach of this research seeks to address this concern by accommodating Fourth Generation Evaluation with this more pragmatic approach: Utilization-focused evaluation.

As noted in the previous chapter, in small business research, researchers have sought integration through research designs that use mixed quantitative and qualitative methods (Curran & Blackburn, 2001; Devins, 1999). However, in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs, as noted in section 3.7, faced with problems of absence of clear programme objectives, difficulties in expressing objectives in quantifiable measures and of considering the heterogeneity of MSMEs arise. This research seeks a more holistic approach to evaluate programmes for MSMEs by accommodating Patton's and Guba and Lincoln's evaluation approaches. The following section presents both the common

²⁸ Patton (1997) urges to move evaluation from considering "possible audiences and potential users, to the real and specific: actual primary intended users ... who have responsibility to apply evaluation findings and implement recommendations" (p. 20-21).

aspects and the differing aspects between Utilization-focused Evaluation and Fourth Generation Evaluation.

4.3 Accommodating Fourth Generation Evaluation and Utilization-focused Evaluation

The purpose of this section is to identify the similarities and differences between Fourth Generation Evaluation and Utilization-focused Evaluation in order to accommodate both approaches.

Patton's evaluation approach seems to be a criticism of Guba and Lincoln's assumptions of naturalistic inquiry. In this sense, Patton argues against the "purist, one-sided advocacy of Lincoln and Guba" and states that his "... pragmatic stance aims to supersede one sided paradigm allegiance by increasing the concrete and practical methodological options available to researchers and evaluators" (Patton, 2002, p. 71).

Patton (2002) recognized that the quantitative/experimental paradigm (or, as he called it, thesis) dominated initial approaches to evaluation and that the alternative paradigm (which he called antithesis) proposed the use of qualitative data, naturalistic inquiry and detailed description. For him, none of these paradigms is in essence better than the other, and he proposes Utilization-focused evaluation as a paradigm choice (what he called synthesis), where pragmatism is seen as overcoming apparent logical contradictions. He argues that within Utilization-focused evaluation, "the focus has shifted to methodological appropriateness rather than orthodoxy, methodological creativity rather than rigid adherence to a paradigm, and methodological flexibility rather than conformity to a narrow set of rules" (Patton, 2002, p. 295).

Patton's (1990) Utilization-Focused approach shares some assumptions with those of other evaluation theorists (e.g. Stake, Cronbach, Rossi and Wholey). For example, he recognizes a quest for situationally responsive evaluation as does Stake, and he quotes Stake when supporting the use of case studies methods (Patton, 1990, 2002). Like Cronbach and Rossi, Patton advocates methodological pluralism, but is closer to Cronbach interest that methods suit questions. Similar to Wholey and Stake, Patton's

view of the responsibility of determining the validity of the evaluation is not placed on the evaluator (Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991).

In relation to Guba and Lincoln's (1989) Fourth Generation Evaluation approach and Patton's (1997a) Utilization-focused Evaluation, the following paragraphs point out several similarities and differences.

Common aspects:

- Patton shares with Guba and Lincoln an inductive mode of inquiry. The inductive inquiry begins by making observations, without imposing pre-existing expectations to develop a hypothesis or to contribute to new theory.
- Guba and Lincoln prefer the idea of transferability instead of generalization (discussed in detail in Chapter Five); in the sense that in making transferability judgements all the hypothesis of the study will be provided and “an extensive and careful description of the time, the place, the context, the culture in which those hypotheses were found to be salient” (1989, pp. 241-242). Similarly, Patton prefers the idea of extrapolation that “involves logically and creatively thinking about what specific findings mean for other situations, rather than the statistical process of generalizing from a sample to a larger population” (1997a, p. 258).
- Guba and Lincoln's way of dealing with the selection of respondents to the inquiry is based on Patton's idea that the sample is selected to serve a certain purpose. Patton describes six types of purposive samples: sampling extreme or deviant cases, sampling typical cases, maximum variation sampling, sampling critical cases, sampling politically important or sensitive cases and convenience sampling. Of these types of samples, Guba and Lincoln seek respondents that present different constructions (maximum variation sampling of respondents), arguing that this provides the broadest scope of information and basis to achieve local understanding.
- Guba and Lincoln advocate the role of the evaluator as collaborator and negotiator among stakeholders, sharing control, learning and responsibility. In this sense, “the fourth generation evaluator must recognize the leadership role he or she plays in assisting the emergent reconstructions to see the light of day; to

act not only as the technician who facilitates the process but as an active participant who shapes the product as well” (1989, p. 261). Similarly, Patton advocates a collaborative relationship with stakeholders, emphasising the consultative role of the evaluator by being active-reactive-adaptive.

- Guba and Lincoln replace objectivity with subjectivity, arguing that the interaction between researcher and researched and the influence that this interaction may have on the results of the inquiry have been deliberately ignored. Similarly, Patton replaces objectivity by urging evaluators to be fair and conscientious in considering multiple realities, perspectives and interests.

Differing aspects:

- Patton, in addition to the inductive mode of inquiry, also acknowledges that depending on the programme context and the needs and values of intended users, a deductive approach may be included in an evaluation. The deductive mode of inquiry requires the specification of main variables and specific research hypotheses before data collection starts, in order to test predefined hypotheses by providing evidence for or against them.
- In the use of a purposive sample to select respondents to the inquiry, Patton allows the use of random and probabilistic sampling depending on the inquiry needs. Randomness of sample selection has no place within Guba and Lincoln’s naturalistic inquiry.
- In relation to procedures to analyse data, Guba and Lincoln focus on case studies, content and pattern analysis, while Patton focuses on answering stakeholders’ questions and does not show any preference for any particular mode of analysis.
- Guba and Lincoln advocate a process-oriented approach aimed at gaining understanding of different perspectives by organizing the evaluation around the CC&I of stakeholders by using an hermeneutic dialectic process. In contrast, Patton advocates a developmental action-oriented approach aimed at utilization where the “evaluator’s primary function in the team is to elucidate team discussions with evaluative questions, data, and logic and to facilitate data-based decision making in the developmental process” (1997a, p.105).
- In relation to the dissemination of evaluation reports, Guba and Lincoln (1981) argue that stakeholders “... have a *right* to receive reports and that evaluators

have a duty to provide them” (p. 364, italics in original). They favour the development of case reports that reflect the joint constructions, which result from the hermeneutic dialect circle. Patton (1997a) has a different view of the dissemination of evaluation reports. He argues that “... a final written report is only one of many mechanisms for facilitating use” (p. 329), and leaves the decision whether to have a final report to the intended users.

- Guba and Lincoln support a constructivist inquiry design (briefly explained in section 2.2.6),²⁹ while Patton supports a situationally responsive design. Patton argues that the design of the evaluation depends on the people involved and their situation.

“Every evaluation situation is unique. A successful evaluation (one that is useful, practical, ethical, and accurate) emerges from the special characteristics and conditions of a particular situation -a mixtures of people, politics, history, context, resources, constraints, values, needs, interests, and chance” (1997a, p. 126).

In order to accommodate Guba and Lincoln’s Fourth Generation Evaluation and Patton’s Utilization-focused Evaluation approach, the analysis presented above helped to identify some similarities, differences and conflicts between them due to ontological and epistemological assumptions. As acknowledged by Shadish, Cook and Leviton (1991), evaluation is characterized by multiple epistemologies, methods and priorities and the analysis presented above reflects the complexity of evaluation theory. Similarly Patton (1997a), emphasising his pragmatic view, states: “I doubt that evaluators will ever reach consensus on the ultimate nature of reality. But the paradigms debate can go on among evaluators without paralyzing the practice of practical evaluators who are trying to work responsively with primary stakeholders to get answers to relevant empirical questions” (p. 297). Ironically, Patton seems to take a negotiating posture between the scientific and the so called alternative paradigms.

Beyond philosophical debates, this research seeks the accommodation of Guba and Lincoln’s Fourth Generation Evaluation and Patton’s Utilization-focused Evaluation approaches by advocating a Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach to evaluate programmes for MSMEs. The SRPPE approach seeks, from the practical point of view, to complement Fourth Generation Evaluation and

²⁹ For a detailed explanation see: Guba and Lincoln (1989), Chapter Six.

Utilization-focused evaluation by accommodating their methodologies; however, from the theoretical point of view, their methodologies are used in parallel (Gregory, 1996). In this sense, the SRPPE approach is:

- Situational because it follows an iterative active-reactive-adaptive process advocated by Patton (1997a).
- Responsive because programme stakeholders' CC&I drive the evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).
- Practical because it focuses on providing useful information for programme improvement and decision making (Patton, 1997a).
- Participatory because it seeks the involvement of programme stakeholders in all the stages of the evaluation; those that have a stake in the process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and those that make decisions (Patton, 1997a).

Figure 4.1 shows the components of the Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach and how each of the research questions (presented in section 1.4) relates to each activity.

Figure 4.1 Components of the Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach related to research questions

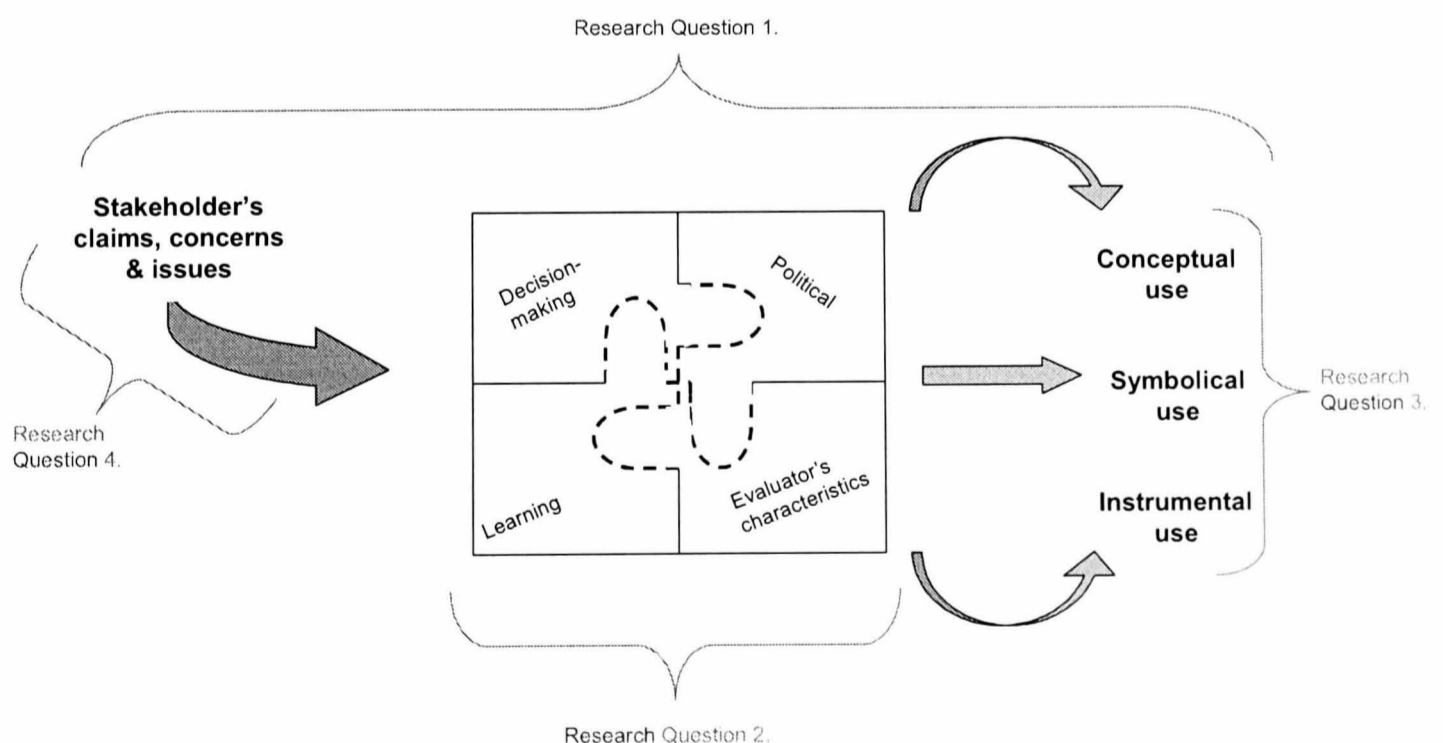


Figure 4.1 takes the form of an *input-process-output* view; where stakeholders' CC&I are the *inputs* of the evaluation process, depicted in the form of a four piece jigsaw puzzle. Analysing the *inputs* helps to answer the fourth research question: Was the methodology used in this research, appropriate to deal with the type of claims, concerns and issues programme stakeholders raised?

Each of the quadrants is one of the components of the SRPPE approach and represents the evaluation *process*. The interconnectedness and interrelation of the components are highlighted by the puzzle figure and the intermittent lines that connect them. Analysing the evaluation *process* helps to answer the second research question: Do the components of the evaluation approach help to address the programme stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues?

As *output* of the evaluation process, the four components intend to provide a better evaluation picture in contributing to conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of the evaluation. Analysing the *outputs* of the evaluation helps to answer the third research question: Does the participatory evaluation approach help to achieve conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation?

Analysing the whole SRPPE approach helps to answer the first research question: Is the participatory approach to MSME programme evaluation, developed in this research, an appropriate way to consider intangible factors in programme evaluation?

Having noted the relationship between each of the activities of the SRPPE approach with the research questions, the following sections explain in more detail the SRPPE approach.

4.3.1 Explaining the Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach

Taking into account that programme evaluation in SMEs often ignores intangible factors (as noted in Chapter Three), the SRPPE approach developed here aims to take into account those intangible factors by considering them as the organizers of the

evaluation approach. The SRPPE approach considers the intangible factors as represented by the CC&I of the programme stakeholders. It considers as part of the process evaluation four components: decision-making, political, learning and evaluators' characteristics. Finally, it considers as part of the outputs of the evaluation process three uses of evaluation: conceptual, symbolic and instrumental use. The following subsections explain in detail the SRPPE approach.

4.3.2 Claims, concerns and issues

As previously noted, this responsive approach is informed by the programme stakeholders favourable assertions related to the programme (claims); the unfavourable assertions related to the programme (concerns) and the declarations of disagreement between stakeholders of the programme (issues). In this sense, the stakeholders' CC&I are the inputs of the SRPPE approach. Therefore the SRPPE approach is driven by the stakeholders' CC&I, described previously in this research as intangible factors.

4.3.3 The decision-making component and its dimensions

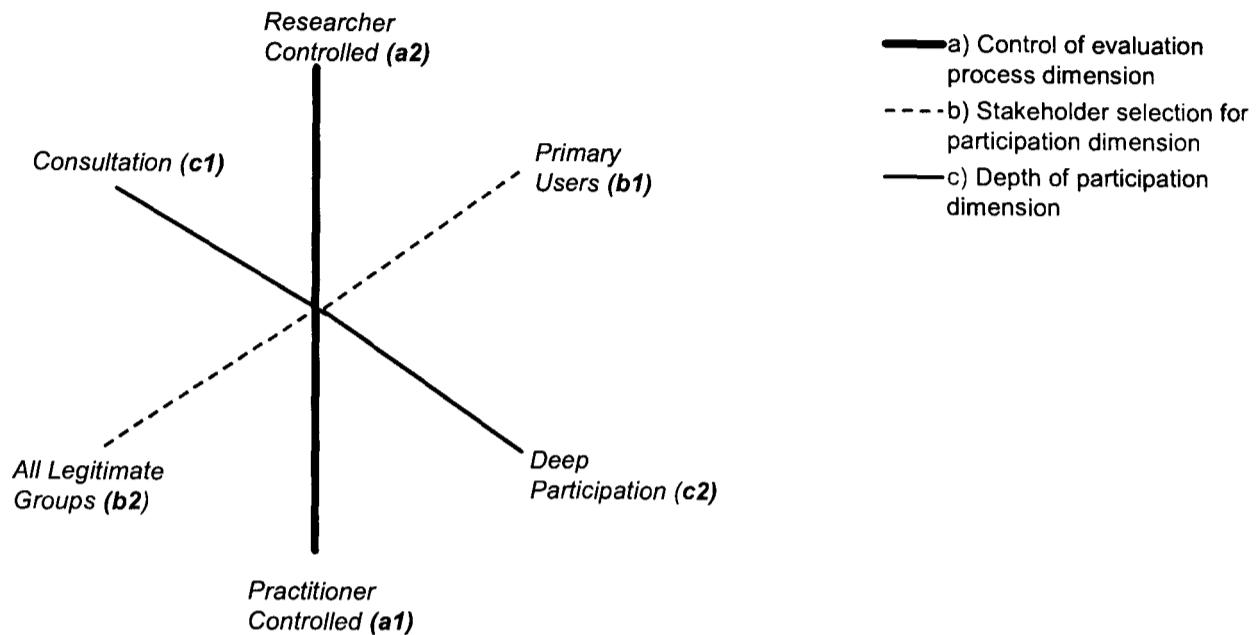
In the decision-making perspective, evaluations are carried out in order to determine if a programme should be continued, be improved, or be terminated (Weiss, 1987). These are the kind of decisions that evaluation results lead to, and they underlie the relationship between the process of doing evaluation and its results (Cousins, Donohue & Bloom, 1996; Cousins & Earl, 1992, 1995a; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Patton, 1997a).

In order to understand the kind of decisions made in carrying out evaluation and as part of the decision-making component, Cousins and Whitmore (1998) suggested a three dimensional model including the following dimensions: control of evaluation process; stakeholders' selection for participation and depth of participation.

As a three-dimensional model, Figure 4.2 shows the possible ranges of control, ranges of participation and levels of participation that serves to locate the evaluation process on these dimensions; as giving it coordinates (x, y, z) . These dimensions represent some of

the important decisions that the evaluator has to make in planning, organising and structuring an evaluation process.

Figure 4.2 Three dimensions of the decision-making component



Source: Modified from Cousins & Whitmore, 1998 p. 11

The first dimension, *control of evaluation process*, ranges from control of decisions made completely by the researcher (a2), as in objectivist approaches to evaluation advocated by Stufflebeam (1994), to control handed out completely to practitioners (a1), as advocated by Fetterman (1997) and Fetterman et al, (1996) in empowerment evaluation (see Figure 4.3). Cousins and Earl (1992) and King (1995) stated that through broader depth and range of primary users' participation, the utilization of the process itself and the findings are enhanced. For example, in Patton's (1997a) Utilization-focused evaluation, the intended users of the evaluation have control of the evaluation, by making decisions on the questions the evaluation will address, the methods to be used, how to analyse the collected information and how, if at all, to report the results of the evaluation. In contrast, Fourth Generation Evaluation suggests a shared control between stakeholders and the evaluator through the hermeneutic-dialectic process followed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The second dimension is *stakeholders' selection for participation*. At one extreme of the range is an inclusive approach to evaluation where all legitimate groups are involved

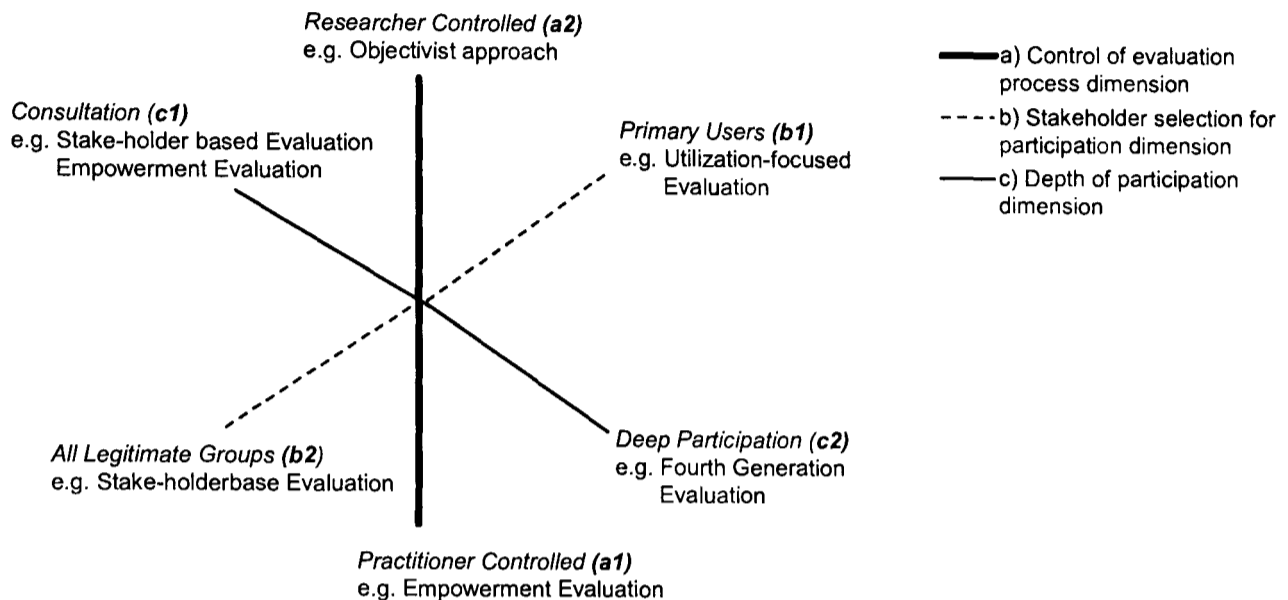
(b2), as advocated by Bryk (1983) in stakeholder-based evaluation or as advocated in Fourth Generation Evaluation, where the persons or groups that are put at risk by the evaluation or the less powerful are involved (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). At the other extreme, primary users' involvement is restricted (b1), as is the case of the Utilization-focused evaluation approach, advocated by Patton (1997a), where intended users, those that make decisions, are selected to participate in the evaluation (see Figure 4.3). Cousins and Whitmore (1998) noted the tendency in evaluation practice of working in partnership with potential users.³⁰ This is in the sense that those stakeholders that have the power to take action and do something with evaluation findings and recommendations are involved in the process. Concerns in this dimension have been directed towards deciding who participates and how participants are identified and selected (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

Finally, the third dimension is *depth of participation*. On the one hand it considers a superficial participation of stakeholders through consultations (c1), as is the case of stakeholder-based evaluation and empowerment evaluation. On the other hand, it also considers a more deep participation where stakeholders are involved in all the different aspects of evaluation (c2), as advocated by Fourth Generation Evaluation (see Figure 4.3). Participation can take many forms, and can be seen as a scale of involvement that varies from participation as a passive receptive respondent to different levels of active respondents. People can participate in a survey by simply answering questions; by participating in the design of the research process; or by fully getting involved in the different stages of the inquiry (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Feuerstein, 1986; Garaway, 1995; King, 1995; Nelson & Wright, 1995). Researchers have questioned the value and feasibility of complete involvement of programme stakeholders in the evaluation process; arguing that it is not necessary and that it should be restricted to less technical evaluation tasks, such as planning, interpretation, and dissemination, instead of highly technical ones such as data collection and, in some respects, analysis (Cousins, Donohue & Bloom, 1996; Cousins & Earl, 1995b).

³⁰ A term that has been labelled by others as primary users (e.g. Alkin, 1991; Lafleur, 1995). Alkin (1991) distinguished between stakeholders who are 'primary users' and other stakeholders who are the audience of the evaluation. In this sense, primary users are those stakeholders that undertake a responsibility for the implementation of the programme or those that have a particular interest in the programme.

Figure 4.3 shows the different evaluation approaches in relation to the three-dimensional model developed by Cousins and Whitmore (1998).

Figure 4.3 Different evaluation approaches in relation to three dimensions of the decision-making component



There is a relationship between the dimension of an evaluation project as advocated by Cousins and Whitmore (1998), and Weiss's (1998a) perspective of participatory evaluation approaches. She noted that participatory evaluations tend to include different stakeholders at different stages of the evaluation. This inclusion helps to balance issues of power and influence; to broaden the scope of the evaluation and to offer a space where questions can be discussed, experiences can be shared and issues can be acknowledged and negotiated and finally, where knowledge and insight can be gained. However, Weiss also noted that in participatory evaluation, despite it being regarded as an inclusive approach to evaluation, clients, who also have a stake in the programme, are frequently not involved in the process. Weiss concluded by stating that "participatory evaluation, for all its good points, may have the process upside down. We evaluators are trying to enlist program people in our work--doing evaluation--while what they want is to enlist us in their work--improving the organization and its programs" (Weiss, 1998a, p. 32).

Based on Weiss's concern for participatory evaluation, and on the three dimensions of the decision-making component, the following paragraphs explain how these dimensions are used in the SRPPE approach of this research project.

Control of the evaluation in this research project

This research was first conceived of as trying to find a balance between the control the researcher was willing to exercise because of her own interest in the research and the methodology used, and the control stakeholders needed to have that would make them feel, as owners of the evaluation. Therefore, considering the dimension of control of the evaluation process, one coordinate of the SRPPE approach is (a1-a2).

Selection of stakeholders in this research project

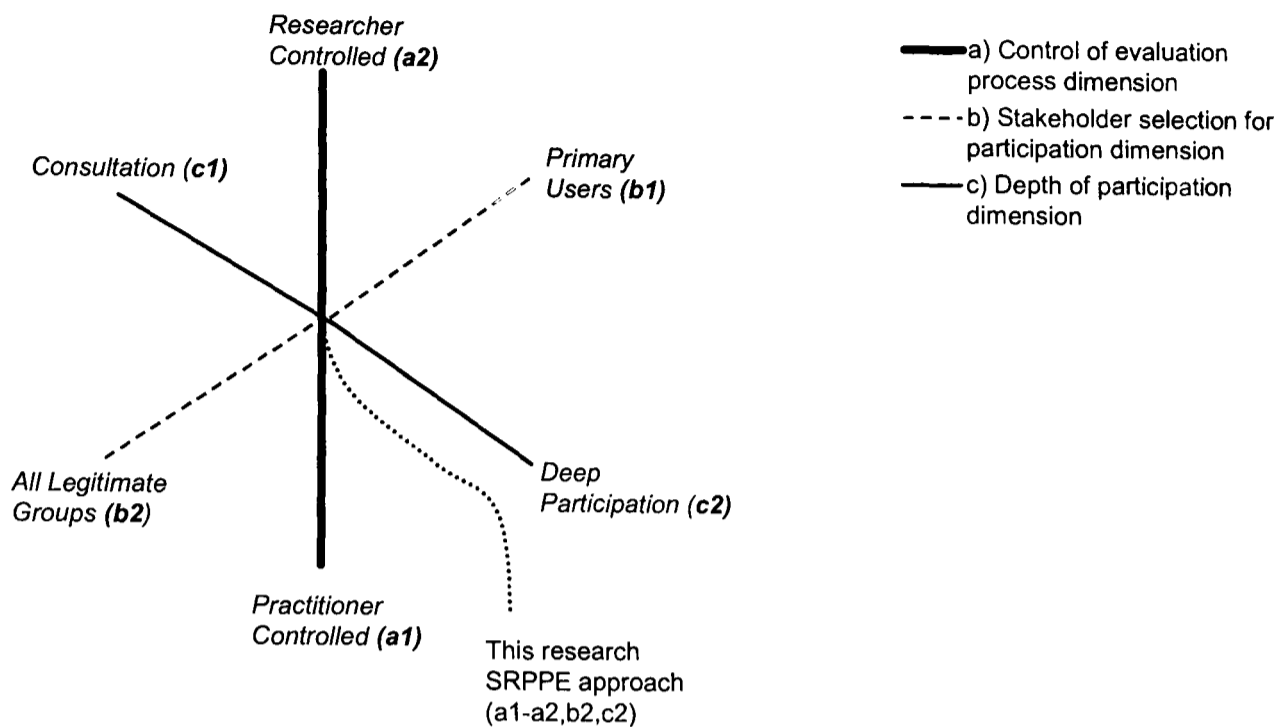
In relation to the selection of stakeholders for participation, this research was interested in involving all those stakeholders that have a stake in each evaluated programme. In this sense, this research was not conceived of as trying to give more power to those stakeholders that already have it. These are in Patton's (1997a) terms, primary intended users, those who are responsible for applying evaluation findings and implementing recommendations. This research aimed to provide opportunities to hear the voices of those programme stakeholders that were involved and affected by the programme; therefore the next coordinate of the SRPPE approach would be (b2).

Depth of participation of stakeholders in this research project

In relation to the depth of participation, this research encouraged participants to be involved deeply in all the stages of the evaluation's process. Therefore, its final coordinate was (c2). However, the researcher is aware that various factors limited this depth of participation, such as the time available for the fieldwork; stakeholders' time availability and commitment to the research. The depth of participation achieved in the interventions is analysed and discussed in Chapter Six and in Chapter Eight.

Figure 4.4 locates the SRPPE approach of this research in relation to the three dimensions of the decision-making component.

Figure 4.4 This research SRPPE approach within the three dimensions of the decision-making component



In general, the decision-making component reveals that the results of an evaluation are interwoven and form part of the process of evaluation carried out. In this sense, decisions of control of the evaluation process, of stakeholders' selection for participation and of depth of participation influence the process, shape the relationship between the evaluator and the stakeholders and, at the same time, influence the results of the evaluation.

For example, Devins and Gold (2002) recognized the importance of the relationship developed between providers of support to SMEs and receivers of that support. They suggested adopting a social constructionist framework to support small business managers and their businesses. They recognized the importance of communication spaces within which meaning can take place by interchanges between small business managers and those who provide support to SMEs. "The development of relationships between small business managers and those who wish to intervene in the business is a crucial element of the support process" (Devins & Gold, 2002, p.11). They also considered that the degree to which small business managers can set the agenda and direct the conversation based on their interest is a key feature of the support process where those that provide support have also their own agenda; thus reflecting the political character in the decision-making process.

The following subsection analyses the political component of the SRPPE approach.

4.3.4 The political component

The importance of considering the context or the political environment of the evaluation process has been widely acknowledged (Chelimsky, 1997; Cronbach et al 1980; Garaway, 1995; Greene & McClintock, 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; House, 1993; Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991; Weiss, 1970, 1998a; Worthen & Sanders, 1991). According to Patton (1997a) political considerations are present in every evaluation; moreover Guba and Lincoln (1989) argued that every action carried out in an evaluation process is a political action.

The acknowledgement of the political character of evaluation is emphasised in different ways according to different schools of thought. For example, Guba and Lincoln (1989) acknowledged the impact of politics in evaluation by noting that the hermeneutic/dialectic process, intrinsic in Fourth Generation Evaluation methodology, considers and evokes political inputs. In a similar way, Patton (1997a) recognized that values, perceptions and political considerations influence the whole evaluation process.

Cousins and Leithwood (1986) identified six factors, which define the political environment and influence the use of evaluation. These are:

- 1) *Information needs*. Evaluations should take into account the information needs of different stakeholders and decision makers. Evaluators should be aware of the extent to which different information needs are perceived in an organization.
- 2) *Decision characteristics/context*. Evaluators should consider the degree to which decisions are considered relevant, new or conflictive.
- 3) *Political climate*. Evaluators should be aware of the presence of rivalries, power conflicts and the sense of threat between different stakeholders within the organization.
- 4) *Competing information*. Evaluators should be aware of different sources of information for evaluation purposes and working knowledge (personal experience, beliefs, values, interest and goals) that stakeholders use in addition to or integrated with evaluation results.

5) *Personal characteristics*. Evaluators should be aware of the decision makers' organizational role, experience, training and leadership style.

6) *User commitment and/or receptiveness to evaluation*. Evaluators should consider the extent to which decision makers were involved in the evaluation process and their attitude towards it.

These six political factors of evaluation have been criticised because they link “the use of data to an undifferentiated individual called the decision maker” (Cousins & Earl, 1995a, p. 10). These factors then consider decisions made by a single individual instead of considering decisions as a product of discussion, interaction and negotiation among different stakeholders. Additionally, Cousins and Earl (1995a) criticised the six political factors because they fail to acknowledge the influence that different forms of interaction bring to the process.

In order to overcome the weaknesses of the six political factors of an evaluation process, Greene (1997) pointed out that the evaluator should acknowledge the assumptions behind decisions and the evaluation process. Greene argued that “it is time for evaluators to explicitly state the value commitments, programmatic assumptions, and political stances that underlie their chosen methodology” (p. 28).

The six political factors and their weaknesses helped the researcher to think about and acknowledge the complex political character of the evaluation process of this research project. In this sense, considerations of the evaluation activity itself; the context where the evaluation takes place; the decisions made by the evaluator; and the relationships present, all of which emerge from the evaluation process, are signs of the difficulty in trying to isolate political factors from the other components of the evaluation approach. For example, in evaluating a micro business support intervention, Devins (1999) noted that as part of the political relationship between the small business owner-manager and the advisor of the programme (provider of the service), the degree to which their personalities adapt to each other should be considered as determinants of the strength of their relationship.

In summary, the different political factors should form an integrated rationale that reflects evaluation complexity (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). Evaluations should not

reflect only technicalities but also political considerations, and questions such as who benefits from evaluation, and who loses from it (Brisolara, 1998; Worthen & Sanders, 1991).

This section highlighted that political issues are embedded in every evaluation. Questions such as who is to be involved in the process and whose values to consider represent some of the questions related to political considerations in evaluation, which are also central to social science debates (Brisolara, 1998; Nelson & Wright, 1995).

The political component was used when the researcher considered the context where evaluation took place in each of the two programmes studied. Attention was paid to Cousins and Leithwood's (1986) six factors that define the political settings and the interactions that took place in the evaluation process. As explained in Chapter Five, focus groups were relevant research methods because they allowed interaction between people, and they encouraged discussion and presentation of ideas. In contrast, the researcher considered that individual interviews might provide a fragmented picture of the evaluation process, because interactions between stakeholders are not encouraged.

The following subsection explores the learning component of an evaluation process. With the objective of developing a comprehensive explanation of the components of the SRPPE approach this element is discussed in a separate section. However, one should be aware that it is also merged in the overall evaluation process.

4.3.5 The learning component

In order to understand the process of evaluation and its use, a learning component, which specifically favours organizational learning, has been included (Cousins & Earl, 1992, 1995a; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Preskill & Torres, 1999). Cousins and Earl (1992) argued that organizational learning provides a theoretical justification of participatory evaluation, because it considers that knowledge is socially constructed and that knowledge systems and memories are constructed and shared by members of an organization (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Senge, 1990).

Cousins and Earl (1992) argued that the evaluation process leads to organizational learning because a better understanding of the organization is encouraged. Popper and Lipshitz (2000) recognized that organizational learning is affected by the learning of the individuals that are members of the organization and depends on interactions between group members. Thus, organizational learning takes place within individuals, and it is not a product of the sum of individual learning (Argyris & Schon, 1996) because it requires interaction between individuals. For Lipshitz and Popper (2000) individual learning can be studied basically as a cognitive process, while organizational learning should be studied in terms of cognitive and social processes. They concluded that both individual and organizational learning have in common the involvement of the same phases of information processing: “collection, analysis, abstraction and retention” (Popper & Lipshitz, 2000, p. 187), where the transformation from uninterpreted information (data) into interpreted information (knowledge) occurs. In addition, organizational learning involves an extra phase, that is, dissemination: “the transmission of information and knowledge among different persons and organizational units” (Popper & Lipshitz, 2000, p. 187).

In evaluation, dissemination of results could begin with the preparation of an evaluation report, but it is not the only way to transmit the evaluation results (Patton, 1997a). Alkin (1991) suggested that evaluators should be creative in the way they disseminate information. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggested that the evaluation report should be a collaborative construction that should include the stakeholders, their context and the reasons for the process of evaluation. Chapter Seven presents, through case studies, a report of the evaluation of two programmes for MSMEs conducted during the fieldwork. These case studies are organized according to the conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation that the SRPPE approach intends to promote and aim to reflect the CC&I of the stakeholders of the programmes evaluated.

The idea of organizational learning has important implications for evaluation use because organizations need to adapt and learn from the continuous changing conditions. In the same way, organizational learning enables stakeholders and evaluators to learn through the cooperation process of evaluation. In addition, organizational learning helps in the evaluation process because it could encourage single and double loop learning (Cousins & Earl, 1992). Single loop learning can be identified when stakeholders learn

to cope with the emergent problems they face. Double loop learning occurs when staff (or stakeholders) question the way things are done, and reflect on the assumptions beneath day to day activities (Cousins & Earl, 1992). In this respect, Cousins and Earl (1992) stated that “the requirement of direct involvement in the research process and learning about the technical research knowledge will heighten opportunities for staff to discuss process and outcome data, to rethink their conception and challenge basic assumptions in way not previously available” (p. 401).

Cousins and Earl (1992) stressed the following necessary conditions to create a learning system that enhances organizational learning. These conditions refer to the organization and to the evaluator. In this sense, it is expected that the organization values the evaluation; that it has a commitment to organizational learning as a way to improvement; that it provides time and resources needed; that it provides training that will develop research skills in primary users that participate in the evaluation; that it gives follow up to the evaluation process, and that the organization motivates primary users participating in the evaluation.

It should be acknowledged that the consideration of organizational learning as support for participatory evaluation approaches has been questioned. For example, Huberman (1995) highlighted that a follow up of the evaluation process and an implementation of the recommendations was needed in order for it to be regarded as organizational learning. This takes time and requires longitudinal evaluation of programmes. Thus the scope of this research considers the feedback and reflection from participants as initial stages in promoting organizational learning. Similarly, Cousins and Earl (1995b) argued that while organizational learning cannot be guaranteed as a result of the evaluation process, it could be promoted. They recognized that organizational learning takes time and that it is the product of continuous activity that promotes the interaction and group understanding of the organizational events and circumstances and suggests that the willingness of stakeholders to continue with applied research activities should be addressed. Cousins (1996) argued that participatory evaluation approaches have the potential to provide the type of opportunities needed in the development of organizational learning capacity.

This research acknowledges that organizational learning takes time and favours, as support of organizational learning, the dissemination of evaluation results. Regarding the dissemination of evaluation results, Patton (1997a) and Guba and Lincoln (1987) present different arguments (see section 4.3). Patton (1997a) downplays the importance of the dissemination process, arguing that this should be part of intended users' decisions. He suggests that programme staff fear the negative results of an evaluation, leading to its weakness and failure to utilize it. He argues that depending on who is using and who is interpreting the evaluation findings, they could be perceived as positive or negative. However, incongruence with his approach is found in his argument that "evaluators can shape the environment and context in which findings are reviewed so that the focus is on learning and improvement rather than absolute judgement" (Patton, 1997a, p. 336). This contradicts his overall evaluation approach, which calls for the 'stick of control' to be handed over to the intended users of the evaluation, in the sense that they define the evaluation purpose as well as the evaluator's role. For example, if intended users want the evaluation to judge the programme and the results are negative, Patton is suggesting that evaluation results be presented in a way that favours learning and use, instead of simply judgment. The problem revealed here, is that Patton's learning approach is an emergent view instead of being an integrated element of the overall Utilization-focused evaluation approach.

In contrast, Guba and Lincoln's (1987) learning approach is embedded in the hermeneutic/dialectic process by enabling new levels of information and sophistication in all parties' constructions. Their approach is intended to be an educative experience for all (stakeholders and evaluators); where everybody learns and teaches. Their approach favours the collaborative construction of evaluation reports and considers case studies as the best way of disseminating the information.

In relation to MSMEs, Tann and Laforet (1997) analysed Business Links' self-employed consultants that provide support for SMEs. They concluded as a consultancy problem that Business Links fail to "recognised the potential for client learning through involvement in monitoring and evaluation" (p.15). Lundström and Stevenson (2001) noted the same problem in SME policy evaluation. They argued that in general the SME policy evaluation system does not have a learning element in it where different people involved on the programme learn about the process. They noted that "the evaluations

done so far are mainly decided by the same organisations who are responsible for the operation of the programs” (p.25). Lundström and Stevenson’s concern justifies the need to include a learning component in the overall SRPPE approach to evaluating programmes for MSMEs.

The learning component was useful in this research project because it encouraged the improvement of the programmes studied and a better understanding of the CC&I that stakeholders had about the particular programmes. The learning component helped to consider how programmes adapt and learn from the process of evaluation (Weiss, 1998a). Noting that organizational learning cannot be assured (Cousins & Earl, 1995b) it is considered that the SRPPE has the potential of translating individual learning into organizational learning by involving stakeholders in different stages of the process and by considering the willingness of stakeholders to continue to apply this evaluation approach. Taking into account the dissemination of evaluation as part of the learning component and as a way of achieving evaluation use, the researcher considers that the documentation and dissemination of the results is needed. Therefore, Chapter Seven presents the reports and outcomes of the evaluation interventions carried out as part of this research.

In general, this section highlighted that organizational learning supports a participatory evaluation approach, taking into consideration Bandura’s idea that knowledge is socially constructed; and that people develop models and ideas that influence their perceptions, actions and learning (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Senge, 1990). In this sense, this section acknowledged that learning takes place at the individual level and that this must be translated into organizational learning through a social process of interaction, in which dissemination plays an important role. Therefore, the importance of considering the documentation and dissemination of the evaluation process and report, as part of the organizational learning process were acknowledged. Although it could be argued that organizational learning mainly contributes to the conceptual utilization of evaluation, it should be noted that each component of the SRPPE approach is complex in of itself and cannot be isolated from the rest of the components; reflecting the accommodation and interrelated approach. Therefore, for the purpose of understanding the overall SRPPE approach, the next subsection considers the influence of the characteristics of the evaluator.

4.3.6 The characteristics of the evaluator component

In structuring a framework of the use of evaluation results, various factors that influence the evaluation process have been proposed. For example, Whitmore (1998) identified what she called ‘essential ingredients’ for making participatory evaluation work. These include: (1) a receptive context where openness prevails; (2) the evaluator’s commitment to participation and appreciation of stakeholders’ capacity; (3) enough time so the process can work; (4) evaluator’s skills such as facilitation, team building, negotiation, problem resolution, reflexivity; and (5) stakeholders’ engagement in the capacity building process. These ‘essential ingredients’ take into account the decision-making, the political and the learning components of the SRPPE approach, discussed in the last sections. However, it could be argued that they depend strongly on the evaluator and her political abilities as manager, negotiator and conciliator.

As indicated in Chapter Two, Patton (1997a) favours an evaluation focused on decision makers. Patton stresses the information needs of primary users of the evaluation, while Guba and Lincoln (1989) focus on the stakeholders’ CC&I. Additionally, as part of the decision makers interests, this evaluation approach looks at evaluators in some depth because they play a key role in the evaluation process, Therefore, it highlights that the evaluation process cannot be isolated from the evaluators’ characteristics.

Cousins and Earl (1995a) argued that the evaluation process becomes the distinguishable characteristic of participatory evaluation approaches and evaluators play a decisive role in the evaluation. In this sense, the evaluator becomes a partner of the programme stakeholders. Evaluators bring technical skills to the research and stakeholders bring their knowledge of the programme (context and content). Evaluators also train participants, facilitate group discussions and seek conciliation and negotiation of contrasting perspectives (Brisolara, 1998). The evaluation is an iterative process where participants share resources, responsibilities and knowledge (Brisolara, 1998; Garaway, 1995). Therefore, the evaluator has an educational role in training stakeholders about the procedures and technical skills needed; expecting that stakeholders learn those skills, achieving a capacity building objective, to continue with the evaluation process (Cousins & Earl, 1995a; Whitmore, 1998).

Active, reactive and adaptive evaluators

As discussed in Chapter Two, Patton (1997a) urges evaluators to be situationally responsive by being *active-reactive-adaptive*. Guba and Lincoln's (1987) evaluation approach is compatible with the active-reactive-adaptive perspective, in the sense that it involves the construction and reconstruction of realities in a hermeneutic process that has, as one of its consequences, action.

If evaluators are active-reactive and adaptive, then they will be able to be flexible according to the changing context where evaluation is carried out, and also adaptable to the changes in stakeholders' participation. Being active-reactive and adaptive gives evaluators the flexibility needed to deal with complex scenarios where several factors interact, for example, the decision-making process, political considerations, learning factors as well as the influence of the evaluator. In addition to being active-reactive-adaptive, the evaluator should continuously and systematically reflect on her own biases and on the way she affects the process (Brisolara, 1998). Evaluators should develop ways to mitigate their attempts to influence the evaluation process (Whitmore, 1998).

Characteristics of participatory evaluators

Burke (1998) highlighted the following characteristics that participatory evaluators need:

- Personal commitment to an interactive process.
- Ability to work as a part of a team.
- Technical expertise and training in a wide variety of research techniques and methodologies, with emphasis on participatory methodologies.
- Group facilitation skills, including understanding group process, dealing with tensions and conflict, equalizing participation, running participatory activities, summarizing, and being an active listener.
- Ability to communicate with different kinds of stakeholders, such as members of grassroots groups, government representatives, and representatives of international donor agencies.
- Teaching skills, the ability to communicate evaluation methodology, and adaptability to a variety of teaching context" (Burke, 1998, pp. 49-50).

Fourth generation evaluators

Guba and Lincoln (1997) stress that Fourth Generation evaluators should possess, with some reinterpretations, the technical, descriptive and judgemental skills of first generations evaluators (see Chapter Two). In this sense, they noted that the descriptive skill should be enhanced with the ability of providing 'thick descriptions' of the context

and salient factors that could accompany vicarious experiences. Similarly, Amin and Thrift (1994) attempting to identify 'growth poles' in regional development, recognized that social and cultural factors are at the centre of economic success. They added that these "factors are best summed up by the phrase 'institutional thickness'" (p. 14). This institutional thickness requires, to support and stimulate entrepreneurship, a strong institutional presence (a variety of institutions that could support the region), high levels of interaction between the institutions, the development of collective representation of the region, and the development among participants of the institutions of mutual awareness. These social and cultural factors are reflected in Guba and Lincoln's reinterpretation of the evaluator's judgmental role as that of mediator of the judgemental process. In this sense, evaluators should move from the role of controller to that of collaborator, where power is shared (a political role). Evaluators should fulfil the role of learner and teacher instead of being simply investigators. In addition, evaluators should fulfil the role of influence agents, sharing mutual responsibility in the evaluation process. Finally, the evaluator's role is as a change agent rather than a passive observer. The Fourth Generation Evaluation approach highlighted that the evaluator's role includes elements dictated by political, ethical and methodological streams of the evaluation process.

Utilization-focused evaluator

Utilization-focused evaluation suggests that the evaluator should negotiate his/her role with intended users. Depending on the type of evaluation, the evaluator's role may be that of scientist, judge, consultant, auditor or change agent (Patton, 1997a). Similarly, Cousins and Earl (1992) identified the following requirements of the evaluator in order to enhance organizational learning: evaluators' training and experience in technical research skills and pedagogical skills; their accessibility to organizations for participatory activities; their motivation to participate and their tolerance for imperfection and difficulties of the process.

In general, the evaluator's characteristics, features and requirements described in this section represent general or theoretical roles of evaluators in the evaluation process. However, there are a number of factors that can make the evaluators' role quite different and that have been mentioned in previous sections, such as:

- The decisions that evaluators make as part of the evaluation process and that can influence the utilization of evaluation results (section 4.2.2.2).
- The factors that define the political environment and that influence the use of evaluation (section 4.2.2.3).
- The conditions necessary to create a learning system that enhances organizational learning (section 4.2.2.4).

These factors reveal the interrelated character of the SRPPE approach developed in this research project, whereby one component influences and is affected by the other components and their interaction is needed in order to achieve the different types of utilization of evaluation, discussed in the following section.

The characteristics of the evaluator component were useful in this research because they were a way of reflecting on and analysing the influence the researcher exercised in the overall process of evaluation. The extent to which the researcher covered or failed to cover the necessary evaluators' features, characteristics and requirements was considered an important factor in shaping the SRPPE approach of this project and therefore is analysed in Chapter Eight.

This section highlighted the interaction of the different components of the SRPPE approach and the influence of the evaluators' characteristics in the overall evaluation process. Part of this interactive character of the evaluation process and of the role of the evaluator is reflected in the idea of an active-reactive-adaptive evaluator that allows flexibility in dealing with the complex scenarios where evaluations take place, as well as to deal with the complexity of the evaluation process.

The following subsection discusses the uses given to the evaluation.

4.3.7 Conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation

Cousins and Whitmore (1998) argued that the objective of practical participatory evaluation approaches is the promotion of evaluation use via stakeholders. This research questions whether the SRPPE approach can help in achieving an understanding of

evaluation use (see Question 3, section 1.4). The underlying assumption is “that evaluation is geared toward program, policy, or organizational decision making (with the core premise that) stakeholders’ participation in evaluation will enhance evaluation relevance, ownership, and thus utilization” (p. 6).

The use of evaluation has been conceived in a threefold manner (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991; Weiss, 1986):

1. Conceptual use, with the purpose of contributing in educative and learning activities;
2. Symbolic use, with the purpose of using evaluation results in the political or persuasive arena, where decisions made are reaffirmed or further in certain agenda; and
3. Instrumental use, with the purpose of using evaluation results in support of decision making and programme improvement.

Garaway (1995) referred to these uses of evaluation as education-oriented, persuasive-oriented and action-oriented.

Shadish, Cook and Leviton (1991) noted some of the activities that aid in the instrumental and conceptual use of evaluation, such as identifying users in the early stage of the evaluation; having frequent contacts with them, in particular during questions formation; studying things that can be controlled by the users; providing interim results; translating findings into actions; and disseminating the results of the evaluation. Additionally, they noted that conceptual use could also be facilitated by challenging fundamental assumptions about programme problems and policies and by circulating the results of the evaluation to interest groups.

In relation to the symbolic use of evaluation, Guba and Lincoln (1981) considered that case studies are more politically sensitive than other types of evaluation reports because of their focus on particular units provides the basis for tacit inferences and because they can be identified with elements of the evaluation such as settings, programmes or subjects. They went on to note that because it is difficult to maintain the anonymity, “case studies are more likely than other kinds of reports to upset political balances” (p.

378) and they suggested this as a reason why it is more likely that case study evaluations will be attended.

Utilization-focused evaluation, as argued by Patton (1997a), can be used with conceptual, symbolic, and/or instrumental purposes. He noted that the use of the evaluation depends on the information needs of primary intended users. However, he stressed the importance of what he called ‘the personal factor’ in explaining the utilization of evaluation.

“The personal factor is the presence of an identifiable individual or group of people who personally care about the evaluation and the findings it generates. Where such a person or group was present, evaluations were used; where the personal factor was absent, there was a correspondingly marked absence of evaluation impact” (Patton, 1997a, p. 44).

Guba and Lincoln’s (1987) view of the uses of evaluation also acknowledged the conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation. Guba and Lincoln use a hermeneutic dialectic process in dealing and confronting the stakeholders’ constructions. Ideally the process seeks consensus on the stakeholders’ CC&I. However, as this is rarely achieved, an ‘agenda of negotiation’ is prepared in an effort to resolve the remaining CC&I. Their view of instrumental use is framed in the ‘agenda of negotiation’. “When some claim, concern, or issue is fully resolved, the action to be taken is self-evident” (p. 222). The conceptual use of evaluation is part of the ‘teaching/learning process’ where Fourth Generation is embedded. Finally, the symbolic use of evaluation is also framed in the negotiation of stakeholders’ CC&I.

This research aims at focusing on evaluation use as a support in the improvement of the programmes evaluated by considering the CC&I of the programme stakeholders. The identification of the three uses of evaluation (conceptual, symbolic and instrumental) as part of the SRPPE approach helped the researcher to reflect on the influence this research intervention had on the programmes and the participants. Patton’s idea of the ‘personal factor’ is considered to support the instrumental use of evaluation, while Guba and Lincoln’s idea of a negotiation agenda is considered to support the three uses of evaluation considered in the SRPPE approach. Therefore, this research considered putting forward an agenda of negotiation between programme stakeholders presented in Chapter Seven.

The literature identified that there are different factors that influence the utilization process (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Garaway, 1995; Patton 1997a; Weiss, 1972). Such factors are related to the decision making process; to the organization or the setting where the evaluation is carried out; and to the evaluation itself, including characteristics of the evaluator and the relationship between the evaluator and the evaluand.

In this sense, Cousins and Leithwood (1986) identified the following six factors that influence the utilization of evaluation results:

- 1) *Evaluation quality*: which refers to the evaluation approach and sophistication of methods.
- 2) *Credibility*: of the evaluator(s) and the process carried out.
- 3) *Relevance*: of the evaluation to stakeholders' information needs and the consideration of the context where evaluation is carried out.
- 4) *Communication*: the style, amount and quality of communications with stakeholders.
- 5) *Findings*: the consistency of the results with stakeholders' expectations.
- 6) *Timelines*: in the dissemination of evaluation results to stakeholders.

The extent to which this research project covered the six factors suggested by Cousins and Leithwood (1986) was considered as important and therefore they were taken into account throughout the operationalisation of the SRPPE approach. For example, the quality of the evaluations, their credibility, communication with stakeholders and timelines were addressed in the research methodology (see Chapter Five). The relevance of the evaluations and the stakeholders' expectations of the findings were addressed in the description of each intervention and the development of the case studies (see Chapter Six and Seven).

This section presented the three uses of the SRPPE approach. The three uses of evaluation reveal the interrelated character of the evaluation approach. In the sense that the interrelation between decision-making, political, learning and the characteristics of the evaluator components reflect the instrumental, conceptual and symbolic uses given

to the evaluation. This is presented in detail in the case studies developed as part of the research (see Chapter Seven).

4.4 Conclusion

As mentioned previously, evaluation of programmes for MSMEs has focused on measuring and judging programmes on the basis of tangible factors (e.g. indicators for accounting purposes, indicators of impact of programmes). The importance of intangible factors has been neglected by an emphasis on the quantifiable. This research project acknowledges the importance of intangible factors and relies upon the accommodation of Fourth Generation Evaluation and Utilization-focused Evaluation. To the best of my knowledge, in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs Guba and Lincoln's and Patton's approaches have not yet been used. Therefore, using them in MSME programme evaluation, may seem an adventurous task, especially if we consider the influence and practice of conventional approaches in MSME programme evaluation that focus on tangible factors; the need and demand for accountability for the governmental funds on which these programmes heavily rely, and the intrinsic difficulties involved in this approach, which have led to several criticisms. In spite of this, the researcher considered that the use of a SRPPE approach to evaluate programmes for MSMEs, based on Guba and Lincoln's and Patton's approaches, has much to offer. As noted by, Stame (1999) "concerns for intangible factors would not, of course, recommend evaluators not to engage in measuring the performance of infrastructural investments: but it would call for an understanding of the relationship between the results of the latter and other effect, and of how to achieve them" (p. 106). Considering this, the SRPPE approach to evaluate programmes for MSMEs calls for a complement in seeking ways of improving programmes; and one option is through the accommodation of Fourth Generation Evaluation and Utilization-focused evaluation, where there is much to be gained by taking into account the CC&I of programme stakeholders; in considering the why and how of the programmes rather than just relying on measures and sometimes dubious indicators of what programmes achieve.

As previously noted, this research supports the idea of considering intangible factors as way of complementing the traditional evaluation views that have been used in particular

in MSME programme evaluation. This research seeks to involve and promote the participation of programme stakeholders in the evaluation process by taking into account the intangible factors that affect and influence programme stakeholders, represented by their CC&I. Therefore this chapter is seen as a response to those needs.

This chapter presented the Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach used to evaluate two programmes for MSMEs in this research. The SRPPE approach is informed by an accommodation of Guba and Lincoln's Fourth Generation Evaluation and Patton's Utilization-focused Evaluation. Therefore, an account was given of some of the aspects that they have in common and aspects where they disagree.

This chapter presented and explained the components of the SRPPE approach. The intangible factors are represented by the stakeholders' CC&I. They are the inputs in the evaluation process and therefore are the organizers of the evaluation. The decision-making, political, learning and the evaluator's characteristics components were identified as part of the process of evaluation. These components were analysed separately; however the interrelationship between them was highlighted.

Also, as part of the SRPPE approach three uses of evaluation were identified: conceptual, symbolic and instrumental.

The SRPPE approach developed in this chapter is an attempt to provide a guide to the areas that impact and affect the evaluation of programmes in MSMEs. The discussion of the practical implementation of this approach is supported by the case studies developed in Chapter Seven. The following chapter presents the methodology chosen in this research, considered as complement of the SRPPE approach.

Chapter 5. Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an account of the research methodology followed in this research project. A discussion is presented on the particular methodology chosen, with emphasis on the underlying reasons for deciding the most appropriate methods, given the nature of this research.

This chapter describes the constructivist and interpretivist research paradigm and justifies why this research followed this paradigm. A description is given of the methods used to inquire into the stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues (CC&I). It describes nominal group techniques (NGT) and focus groups as strategies used to collect data. The method used to analyse data qualitatively is also described, and justification given for the decision to use case studies as a means of presenting the interventions carried out in two MSME programmes.

5.2 Constructivist and Interpretivist Methodology

This research advocates an evaluation approach, which could overcome failures in the way programmes for MSME have been evaluated by suggesting a Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach. These failures, which were identified in previous chapters, refer to:

1. The over reliance of MSME programme evaluation on the scientific paradigm, where the main interest is on tangible factors;
2. The neglect of intangible factors in the evaluation process of programmes for MSMEs;
3. The lack of programme stakeholders' involvement in evaluating programmes for MSMEs and
4. Failure to consider the heterogeneity of MSMEs and of entrepreneurs.

In this sense, the methodology followed in this research sought to gain insight and collect data about the stakeholders' perceptions of MSMEs development programmes. The research approach was guided by Guba and Lincoln's (1989) constructivist evaluation framework and informed by Schwandt's (1994) views of constructivist and interpretivist methodologies.

5.2.1 Key assumptions of the constructivist and interpretivist approach of this research

The key features of the constructivist and interpretivist methodology are the following (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1989):

- Focus upon multiple interrelated realities. These are the constructions built by different programme stakeholders while attempting to “make sense” of the circumstances in which they find themselves. Therefore, efforts are made to understand, as closely as possible, some aspects of human experiences as lived, felt or undergone by participants in that experience (Schwandt, 1990).
- Interactive process between the researcher and the participants of research. The influence that this interaction has upon the inquiry is acknowledged (Guba, 1990), and the researcher-researched dualism is abandoned (Smith, 1990; Schwandt, 1994). Additionally, it is acknowledged that the inquiry cannot be value free (Guba, 1990), and not only the stakeholders' values play a role in the evaluation process, but also the researcher's values (Schwandt, 1990).
- Focus upon understanding the complex world from the point of view of those who live it. In order to achieve this understanding, interpretation is needed (Schwandt, 1994). Additionally, the particular cases and their context are considered, given that only within some context does the experience have meaning (Schwandt, 1990).

The relevance of the features of a constructivist and interpretivist methodology to this research on the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs lies in the importance attached to the programme stakeholders perceived CC&I (intangible factors). This is based on the assumption that the different people involved on a MSME development programme

(stakeholders) know the programme better, its strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, due to their different experiences of the benefits and problems faced as a result of the programme, they can give recommendations that could help to solve the programme's problems, improve it and maintain its relevance to the programme stakeholders. This led the researcher to believe that a situationally responsive practical participatory evaluation (SRPPE) approach towards MSME programme evaluation, based on a constructivist and interpretivist approach, may increase the use of evaluation results, because the stakeholders' CC&I drive the evaluation research. Thus the questions addressed are those posed by the stakeholders and the stakeholders are the ones that give answers to these questions and propose ideas for improving the programme. Additionally, this research perspective seeks to be consistent with the chain of dependencies that the constructivist and interpretivist methodology brings about, by seeking to maintain interactions between and with the different stakeholders addressing their issues and concerns; by enabling an exploration of the stakeholders' constructions of the programme; which lead us and the stakeholders to a better understanding of the situation in which they are engaged. Finally, it is hoped that the approach will help to bring about new insight on how overall programmes can be improved through participatory evaluation. The strength of the use of a constructivist and interpretivist methodology mirror those of interventionist evaluation approaches noted by Easterby-Smith (1994) which address the likelihood of being relevant to the programme stakeholders; of being realistic about the stakeholders' needs and being responsive to changing situations.

In SME research, similar constructivist and interpretivist methodologies have been used, as highlighted in Chapter Two. For example, Devins and Gold (2002) noted the failure of interventionist frameworks (off the shelf programmes) that try to give recipes for how small business managers should be developed. They argued that this problem can be bridged by taking a social constructionist view to support small business managers and the development of their organizations. They advocate the creation of a space of conversation where a dialogue between the small business manager and those that provide support could take place, and argued that through ongoing dialogue and storytelling, shared meanings could emerge, providing qualities of uniqueness and value to the participants. Finally, as mentioned in Chapter Two, they noted the need in SME

programme evaluation to move toward fourth generation principles; however they gave no direct advice on how to this.

Chapter Two argued that Fourth Generation Evaluation is more theoretical than practical (Pitman & Maxwell, 1992). Therefore, it was stated that this research seeks to accommodate Fourth Generation Evaluation with a more pragmatic approach (Utilization-focused Evaluation). Doubts as to the feasibility of the accommodation of these approaches were dissipated by the combination of the scientific-constructivist methodology and the research-pragmatic styles of evaluation that enabled Easterby-Smith (1994) to identify five schools of evaluation. In particular, the interventionist evaluation model is of relevance to this research; it is in this school of evaluation that Easterby-Smith (1994) situates Fourth Generation Evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and also where we can situate the Utilization-focused Evaluation approach (Patton, 1997a). Easterby-Smith (1994) indicates that both approaches recognize the need for evaluation to have a direct impact upon programmes and those involved with them. This research considers that recognizing the importance of intangible factors and actually, making them the organizers of the evaluation by acknowledging the stakeholders' CC&I in the SRPPE approach, is a way of achieving impact on the programme and the stakeholders.

5.3 Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability

Before proceeding on the quest to identify the most appropriate research design, this section considers the arguments, which advocate the establishment of trustworthiness of the information provided and the interpretations drawn. This is what is called in scientific research as 'meeting tests of rigour'. The trustworthiness criteria could help researchers to ensure the overall adequacy of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1989); therefore, the research design should take them into account. Guba and Lincoln discussed and reinterpreted the four major criteria of rigour used in scientific research paradigm, these are: internal validity, external validity/generalizability, reliability and objectivity with credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability criteria. Table 5.1 presents the basic criteria of scientific inquiry and their reinterpretation in terms of constructivist inquiry as proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1989).

Table 5.1 Scientific and constructivist terms appropriate to various aspects of rigor

| Criteria | Scientific term | Constructivist term |
|-----------------|--|----------------------------|
| Truth value | Internal validity | Credibility |
| Applicability | External validity/ generalizability | Transferability |
| Consistency | Reliability | Dependability |
| Neutrality | Objectivity | Confirmability |

Source: Guba & Lincoln (1981, 1989); Lincoln (1990)

Credibility

In order to establish truth value within a constructivist approach to research, Guba and Lincoln (1989) argued that “instead of focusing on a presumed ‘real’ reality, ‘out there’, the focus has moved to establishing the match between the constructed realities of respondents (or stakeholders) and those realities as presented by the evaluator and attributed to various stakeholders” (p. 237). They recommended researchers to test the credibility of their findings and interpretations with different groups or audiences that participated in the research process. Corroboration of data and cross-checking with different data sources are key activities to achieve credibility. They also recommended researchers testing their perceptions against the perceptions of the participants, and argued that prolonged engagement and persistent observation also could increase the credibility of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1989). Similarly, Patton (1997a) argued in favour of validating the evaluation results by considering the relevance to and use of evaluation results by the intended users.

In this research the researcher performed individual semi-structured interviews as a way of corroborating stakeholders’ CC&I. Additionally, some questions were asked in different focus groups in order to corroborate the identified CC&I and to crosscheck stakeholders’ perceptions. In relation to the time of observation, this research had to fulfil two constraints:

- First, the evaluation process had to respect the schedule of each programme being evaluated.
- Second, the researcher had limited time (5 months) and money to perform the evaluations. Due to the time-consuming nature of observation, the shortage of

available time and the need for the evaluation to conform to the programme schedule, engagement with programme stakeholders during the fieldwork was sought that could help to balance the time restrictions.

Finally, in order to ensure the credibility of this research, reports and transcripts of the focus groups were developed and were given back to participants in order to ensure that all the points that they considered relevant and that were discussed in the sessions were properly transcribed and included in the information to be analysed. The feedback provided, established an information bridge with programme participants, helped to assure transparency in the research and was also considered ethical.

Transferability

In relation to the applicability criteria, Guba and Lincoln (1981) argued that “a generalization cannot be anything other than a context-free proposition” (1981, p. 118). They suggested that in naturalistic inquiry, the term “generalization” should be replaced with the term “transferability” because context-free statements (generalizations) cannot be made when the research is concerned with human behaviour. They added that credibility reinforces the transferability of the research findings and, transferability can be limited by overemphasising an a priori control of conditions that influence the inquiry. In order to achieve transferability, they suggested that thick descriptions are needed. These involve the description of what is being researched; the surrounding circumstances; the characteristics of the people involved; and also, involves “interpreting the meaning of such demographic and descriptive data in terms of cultural norms and mores, community values, deep-seated attitudes and motives, and the like” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 119).

In the same direction, Ward (1993) argued that at the heart of qualitative research lies the assumption that the qualitative research is very much influenced by the researcher’s perspectives; thus, “the goal is not to produce a standardized set of results that any other careful researcher in the same situation or studying the same issues would have produced. Rather it is to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with detailed study of that situation” (p. 202).

With these considerations in mind, this research seeks to achieve transferability in two ways. The first way is by providing thick descriptions of the programmes evaluated. These thick descriptions are reflected in the description of the evaluation intervention (see Chapter Six) and in the case studies developed for each of the evaluated programmes (see Chapter Seven). The second way of achieving transferability in this research is in the overall methodological approach used; therefore the next chapter, which refers to the intervention, explains the collection of data, which could inform other researchers interested in the methodology used in this research.

Dependability

Referring to the consistency criteria, Guba and Lincoln (1989) considered dependability as a parallel term of reliability. Reliability, used in conventional inquiry, is related to the stability of the data over time. However, dependability considers that the data itself is expected to change; therefore, Guba and Lincoln (1989) noted that “methodological changes and shifts in constructions are expected products of an emergent design dedicated to increasingly sophisticated constructions. Far from being threats to dependability, (they) are hallmarks of a maturing ... inquiry” (p. 242). They noted that the changes and shifts needed to be “tracked and trackable” by giving outside reviewers all the tools necessary to reproduce the research exploring the process, making clear the decisions that evaluators made and the reasons that led them to make certain decisions and interpretations. This research attempts to achieve dependability by making explicit the decisions that the researcher took during the fieldwork (see Chapter Six and Chapter Eight).

Confirmability

In relation to the neutrality criteria, Guba and Lincoln (1981) argued that there is no reason why research data should not be factual and confirmable, thus shifting the focus from the investigator’s proof of being certifiable to requirements of information of being confirmable. They added that “the integrity of the findings are rooted in the data themselves. This means that data (constructions, assertions, facts, and so on) can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit in the narrative of a case study” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). Therefore, this research seeks to achieve confirmability through Chapter Six, which describes the interventions

and through Chapter Seven, which describes the case studies developed of the two programmes evaluated.

In summary, this section states that this research follows a constructivist and interpretivist methodology. Trustworthiness criteria have been introduced to help to ensure the overall adequacy of the research. The issues that remain unanswered are what is the most appropriate research design? And, how will the research design address the trustworthiness criteria? The following sections describe the research design. The next chapter makes reference to the intervention carried out and how the trustworthiness criteria were addressed in this research.

5.4 Methods of inquiry for claims, concerns and issues

In order to determine the research design used in this research, Greene (1998) highlighted that what distinguishes different evaluation methodologies are not their methods, but whose questions and values are addressed and promoted. The SRPPE approach, developed in this research, seeks to address stakeholders' CC&I and to be as responsive to MSME programme stakeholders as it is with programme decision-makers. With this aim in mind, the following sections clarify the methods used to gather CC&I, the methods used to analyse data, and the way this research organized the findings of the evaluation.

5.4.1 Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

The nominal group technique (NGT) is a technique that Delbecq and Van de Ven (1971) originally devised to facilitate group decision-making. There is no single specific format to carry out the NGT in the context of evaluations (Chapple & Murphy, 1996); however, it involves a process that allows:

- 1) The generation of ideas.
- 2) The clarification of ideas.
- 3) The classification of the generated and clarified ideas into clusters based on a criterion of relative importance; and

- 4) The build up of a spirit of participation and teamwork among participants (Warfield & Cardenas, 1994).

The researcher considered it appropriate to use NGT because is a structured technique that elicits participants' perceptions avoiding confrontations or discussions in an organized way. This was particularly relevant in this research due to the conflicts that were identified through semi-structured interviews between some programme stakeholders. Additionally, NGT provides the advantage that all participants have the opportunity to contribute to the process, mitigating the effect of dominant participants.

NGT also deliberately avoids the facilitator's influence, and ensures that the research is driven by participants' concerns (Carney, McIntosh & Worth, 1996). In this research, NGT ensured that the questions addressed in the evaluation were those that reflected programme stakeholders' CC&I, making the evaluation relevant to the participants, giving them a sense of ownership of the process and outcomes, and having the evaluation agenda set by the programme stakeholders.

NGTs have been used for similar purposes in programme evaluation. For example, Chapple and Murphy (1996) noted, in their formative evaluation of a new Bachelor of Nursing programme, that NGT was an economical and speedy way to obtain feedback and participation, limiting the influence of the evaluator and a way of generating issues that were important for programme stakeholders instead of generating answers to questions posed by the evaluator.

NGT was used during the first stage of the process of evaluation of programmes for MSMEs as a way of identifying programme stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues. A topic agenda was prepared for the NGT session with the intention of giving structure to the session (see Appendix 1). The stakeholders' CC&I identified through the NGT were addressed and explored in a second stage of the evaluation, through focus groups with the objective of gaining understanding of the programme, identifying the programme's weaknesses and strengths and suggesting ways of improving it.

The stages involved in the use of NGT are the following (Carney, McIntosh & Worth, 1996; Warfield & Cardenas, 1994):

- 1) **An opening statement.** The process is initiated by the facilitator by presenting the NGT to participants, explaining its procedures and principles, as well as how the results of NGT session will be used. The facilitator presents the participants with a triggering question that has been developed specifically to the session. The triggering question is used to evoke participants' ideas. For this stage, 'rules of the game' are defined. These 'rules of the game' are read to the participants in order to ensure the smooth running of the session.
- 2) **Silent generation of ideas in writing.** In the first stage, participants are asked to record the ideas they generate that would answer the triggering question. The process is carried out in silence with no consultation or discussion between participants. In conducting the session, participants are asked to record each answer on a separate page and in large, legible letters, so that they can use their own records in the next stage.
- 3) **Round robin recording of ideas.** This second stage involves all participants sharing their generated ideas. Each person is invited to share one idea at a time until all ideas have been presented and until all participants have had an equal opportunity to present their ideas. Each page with a written idea is posted on the wall. Each idea is given a number in order to facilitate the future clustering of ideas. The primary objective of this stage is to probe for shared understanding of the generated ideas.
- 4) **Clarification of ideas.** The third stage involves the clarification of the ideas presented in the previous stage, seeking their explanation or further clarification. This stage provides participants with an opportunity to substantiate and expand their ideas. In this stage the facilitator has to clarify the neutral character of the process, where no judgmental comments or criticisms are to be made.
- 5) **Clustering of ideas.** After all ideas have been clarified, participants are asked to name the category in which ideas are to be clustered and to group the ideas that refer to similar topics in the cluster. Ideas can be combined if they have similar meanings, and if ideas overlap or are identical the repeated ideas may be pooled out if it is noted that nothing is lost, thus eliminating duplicated ideas.
- 6) **Voting and ranking.** In the last stage of NGT, participants are asked to select and write the clusters that they consider are the most relevant. Participants are asked to share their decision and a vote is given to each selected cluster, the votes will be added to determine the ranking of the cluster. Participants are asked to select

the clusters that contain the CC&I that they consider should be addressed with priority. Voting is done independently and privately, and then the votes are collected and shared with the group. The total of the votes gives the voting patterns and so identifies the issues the majority of the participants of the session consider should be given priority in the evaluation. This voting and prioritization of clusters becomes the final results of the session. The results of the session are fed back to the participants of the NGT session (programme stakeholders and decision-makers) in a report so that they become aware of the issues that will drive the evaluation.

This section has identified the advantages of NGT and its general procedure. However, NGT has some practical constraints that should be noted. First, in this respect Langford (1994) noted that it is a technique not likely to be effective if the target group is inarticulate, illiterate or is unable to transfer thoughts adequately to paper. Second, Moore (1994) argued that people who like to get their way in groups, and like to control outcomes might show resistance to participate when they note that they cannot control the outcomes. He concluded that the NGT final stage, the voting procedure, might give the impression that the final product represents a group consensus, while the principal outcome is the generation of ideas. Similarly, Chapple and Murphy (1996) warned that although NGT provides an indication of the issues that are important to participants, it is dangerous to assume that a consensus necessarily exists. This is relevant for this research because the researcher is not assuming that a consensus was achieved among participants; on the contrary, this research seeks to present the different views that the different participants have of the programme. With this in mind, focus groups are considered as the way of having access to those stakeholders' perceptions. The following section provides the rationale for deciding on using focus groups.

5.4.2 Focus Group Interviews

A focus group is a group interview designed for small group discussions (Morgan, 1998). It is formed to evaluate, discuss or share impressions about certain issues (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Arksey & Knight, 1999). Generally it involves a discussion among six to ten participants that have something to say about a certain topic and feel comfortable

in saying it to each other (Morgan, 1997). Additionally, focus groups require the facilitation of a moderator, who focuses the discussion (Krueger, 1994). In this sense, it is useful to listen, learn, and explore the way people think, feel and say they act in relation to certain issue (Morgan, 1998). A key distinction of this type of interview is that it allows group discussions, creating a process of sharing, comparing and understanding among participants; allowing the exploration of the group's dynamics; identifying the nature of relationships developed within the group, and producing "qualitative data that provide insights into the attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of participants" (Morgan, 1997, p. 19).

Focus groups can be used for several purposes: to generate information on collective views; to produce information on the meaning behind group assessments; to produce information on the group processes that lead to and support group assessments and to produce information on the normative understanding behind the group collective judgements (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001). Bloor et al (2001) acknowledged that the discussions that occur within the focus group interview provide rich information about the meanings that people assign to certain issues. They noted that, frequently, focus groups have been used as an adjunct to other methods as in pre-pilot work, to provide contextual ground for surveys; to aid in the interpretation of survey findings and as a method for communicating findings to research subjects. Therefore, as an auxiliary method, focus groups have been used at the beginning, middle and end of inquiries. In this research, focus groups were used as a complementary method to evaluate programmes for MSMEs, in the sense that the topics discussed in the focus groups were the CC&I previously identified through the NGT. The discussions were analysed using qualitative data analysis (see section 5.5), and the results of the analysis were presented through case studies (see section 5.6).

It was decided to use focus groups because it is a proven way to gather data about individual beliefs. According to Morgan (1998) focus groups aid in the exploration and discovery of topics; they provide context and depth to aid in understanding people's thoughts and experiences, and are strong in aiding the interpretation and understanding of the way things are and why and how they got to be that way. However, what distinguishes focus groups from other types of interviews is the use of group discussions as means of exploring people's beliefs, generating data, and the considerable flexibility

it provides (Morgan, 1998). As noted by Morgan, “the participants will do the work of exploration and discovery ... and will also generate their own interpretations of the topics that come up in their discussions” (1998, p. 12). In this respect, the group discussions generated through the focus groups sessions provided a valuable insight on the stakeholders’ perceptions of the programme and the ways of improving it. Additionally, they were used as a means to achieve the participation of programme stakeholders by having an active role in the evaluation process. Finally, since the researcher aimed at participatory research driven by programme stakeholders, the use of focus groups was thought to be the most appropriate approach to follow, given its flexibility in allowing the nature of participants’ responses to be inherently up to the participants themselves (Morgan, 1998).

However, some advantages of focus groups could be also considered limitations. For example, the formation of focus groups implies the participation and interaction of a group of people, and ideas, comments and opinions may be affected by the influence or pressure the group generates (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). In the analysis of the dynamics of focus group, Krueger (1998) suggested the need to be aware of what is not said. Other difficulties regarding group dynamics are: the confrontation of opinions, the domination of some participants that may lead to the almost null participation of others, the ability of participants to discuss certain topics, the group influence that may affect the individual participation and the great planning process that it requires (Morgan, 1997). In addition, the questions to be discussed could bias the responses in deciding the answers to follow and there is difficulty in analysing and interpreting rich data (Herbert, 1990). Considering these disadvantages, Herbert (1990) offered some suggestions to prevent them, such as to tape record interviews, to let the interviewees check the interview transcript and to use other sources to compare the information; suggestions that were taken into account during this research fieldwork.

In small business research, focus groups have been less frequently employed (Curran & Blackburn, 2001; Blackburn & Stokes, 2000). Blackburn and Stokes (2000) identified some of the factors that could contribute to the relative low use of focus groups in small business research: the lack of understanding of what focus groups can achieve, if conducted rigorously, and the impression that SME owner-managers’ recruitment to participate in a group is more difficult than interviewing them separately. Nevertheless,

focus groups have been used to research SMEs; for example, MacMillan, Curran, Downing and Turner (1989) explored preferences, strengths and weaknesses of new methods of consultations. After individual interviews with small business owners, they used focus groups. In a similar way, Curran and Blackburn (1994) used focus groups to explore the low levels of networking in Nottingham and Islington small businesses. More recently, Blackburn and Stokes (2000) examined the use of focus groups as a method to research small and medium-sized enterprises; and conclude by recommending the use of focus groups by those who want to understand small business world.

In the specific case of this research, focus groups are used to evaluate programmes for MSMEs as a way of discussing the claims, concerns and issues that participants highlighted, previously, through NGT.

In contrast with Guba and Lincoln's (1989) hermeneutic dialectic cycle (explained in section 2.2.6), which does not make reference to a direct interaction between different stakeholders until the stage of negotiation of conflictive CC&I, this research seeks direct interaction with stakeholders in order to explore and better understand the interactions where they are engaged. As pointed in Chapter Two, Guba and Lincoln (1989) noted that the purpose of using Fourth Generation Evaluation is that, jointly, researcher and stakeholders make sense of and better understand the interaction in which they are engaged; however, in this stage the methodology they espoused does not make reference to a direct group interaction between stakeholders. This research considers that group interaction is an advantage in the evaluation process. Similarly, Blackburn and Stokes (2000) made reference to the advantage focus groups have over face-to-face interviews. They stated that the advantage is that "... each speaker provides a platform for another to contribute ..., business owners were prepared to add to or qualify what had been said previously, providing a much more complete picture of their world" (p. 61). Guba and Lincoln's reference to the constructions the moderator formulates, it could be argued, represents a platform for another respondent to contribute; however, what is missing is the respondents' direct group interaction and what could be questioned is the moderator's involvement and influence.

Overall, it has been established that this research follows a constructivist and interpretivist methodology. NGT is used as a way of identifying stakeholders' CC&I (intangible factors), which would drive the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs. Additionally, as a way of collecting the perceptions of programme stakeholders (which becomes the research data) focus groups are used. The following section presents a discussion of the way the research data is to be analysed and presented.

5.5 Method of analysing data qualitatively

This section explains the way information (stakeholders' CC&I) were analysed and interpreted in this research. There are different ways of analysing (e.g. tape-based, note-base, memory-based) (Krueger, 1994) and of interpreting it (e.g. content analysis, narrative, grounded theory) (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). As stated previously, this research used NGT and focus groups as way of gathering information; therefore, this section concentrates on the decisions made in order to analyse and interpret that information.

5.5.1 Types of qualitative analysis

Krueger (1994) highlighted four options or strategies to analyse the results of focus groups: (1) transcript-based analysis; (2) tape-based analysis; (3) note-based analysis and (4) memory-based analysis. He argued that transcript-based analysis is the most rigorous and time consuming strategy. It involves the process of transcribing the tapes and analysing them together with the researcher's field notes. In the view of other researchers (Bloor et al, 2001) to carry out an analysis without transcription is viewed as not satisfactory for academic purposes, and they add that such analysis often leads to a loss of the richness of the data, and to selective and superficial outcomes. With this in mind, the researcher decided to use the transcript-based analysis in order increase the rigour of this research project. Therefore, personal interviews, the NGT sessions and the focus groups interviews carried out during the fieldwork were transcribed for analysis and interpretation.

Having decided that transcripts of interviews, NGT and focus groups would be used to provide the data to be analysed, the next decision addressed was how to analyse the data. In this respect, Tesch (1990) gave a detailed description of how to analyse qualitative data. She began by distinguishing between four major research types of outcomes: (1) research interested in the study of the characteristics of language; (2) research interested in the discovery of regularities; (3) research interested in seeking to discern meaning and, (4) research based on reflection. Research interested in discovering regularities and in discerning meaning seemed to be the one that better suited the interests of this research.

Research interested in the discovery of regularities

Tesch (1990) distinguished between researchers that seek the identification (and categorization) of elements and the exploration of their connections (as in Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory method) and researchers that seek to discern patterns in the data by making an emphasis on how things work (as in the case of educational evaluation research, action research and collaborative inquiry). She added that the main distinction between these two research approaches is that "for some researchers it is important to establish linkages between/among the elements that they have identified and classified, while others aim mostly at systematic and insightful description of the phenomenon under study" (Tesch, 1990, p. 84). Despite this difference, she noted the possibility of mixing these different research types.

Research interested in discern meaning

Tesch (1990) distinguished the process of discerning meaning when researchers seek to understand a phenomenon through interpretation. Within this interest, researchers seek to study peoples' experiences, to understand them better.

The approach used for data analysis in this research reflected a mixture of Tesch's (1990) description of research interested in the discovery of regularities and in seeking to discern meaning. In this sense, the researcher identified (categorized), explored and connected stakeholders' CC&I in order to develop a meaningful interpretation. Additionally, this research was interested in a formative evaluation of programmes for MSMEs with the intention of helping them to be improved.

In the following section, this chapter concentrates on how the research data were analysed and interpreted using qualitative data analysis, whilst a later section of the chapter refers to how the analysed data are presented.

5.5.2 Procedure of qualitative analysis

Tesch (1990) provided a detailed guide to qualitative data analysis. The decisions made in this research on how to handle, analyse and interpret qualitative data, reflect much of her influence and that of Strauss and Corbin (1998). The following are the different stages that were used to analyse the data:

- 1) **Preparing transcripts.** Transcripts were prepared from the tape recordings of group and individual interviews. Transcripts were done immediately after each interview in order to have a fresh description of what happened and to include accounts of non-verbal communication, and additional information that could help to provide a better picture of each interview. The researcher wrote a report of each group interview, and these reports were sent back to the participants in the sessions in order to receive their comments on the accuracy of the expressed ideas and to ensure the transparency of the process.
- 2) **Using NUD-IST.** Computer assisted software was used to handle more efficiently the data instead of working physically with the transcripts. The software available was NUD-IST and it offered several advantages such as: a windows environment; project management tools such as progress log and memos, list of codes and definitions; a structured organization of codes; flexibility for storing and retrieval data, and speed of access to the information and in searching the data. In learning how to use the software, it was clear that the software did not analyse data; it was an aid, a tool, which facilitated the process by working efficiently with the codes that the researcher identified and that entered in the software (Bloor et al, 2001).
- 3) **Segmenting transcripts (categorization).** The analysis began with the segmentation of the data. The researcher read individual transcripts as a whole, in order to divide them into units of analysis; taking into account that each unit of analysis was comprehensible by itself and contained one idea (Tesch, 1990).

Additionally, care was taken in identifying who said the statement (Bloor et al, 2001) and whether it was a continuation of a dialogue. In this way, it was possible to return to the original transcript and situate the unit of analysis in the context of the specific discussion. This was of particular importance, because as noted by Bloor et al (2001) while categorizing there is the danger that “... the analyst becomes focused on small extracts of data and loses sight of where those data sit within the whole” (p. 64).

- 4) **Developing meaningful categories.** Once transcripts were segmented into units of analysis the categorization and codification process started. As noted by Tesch (1990) categorizing or classification is a way of knowing. Categorizing needs the analyst to be aware of the attributes of things in order to group them in a meaningful way. Needing to know the data in depth, the researcher had the advantage of having facilitated the NGT sessions and the focus group discussions, as well as having to personally transcribe the discussions. The purpose of categorization was to produce concepts that fitted the data and, later, to develop them (Tesch, 1990).

Categories can be derived either from existing theories or from the data themselves, and they are used to analyse research data. As suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998), micro-analysis was used to generate codes from the data. Micro-analysis is the “detailed line-by-line analysis necessary ... to generate initial categories ... and to suggest relationships among categories” (p. 57). Codes were derived from the data themselves. This stage followed the ‘de-contextualization’ of the data because segments of data (units of analysis) are separated from their context (Tesch, 1990). However as noted by Tesch, coded data is not ready to be interpreted, it needed to be ‘re-contextualized’, meaning that all the information that belongs to one category has to be assembled in one place to be analysed and this is within the category itself.

- 5) **An iterative process of analysis.** As the coding process developed, codes were renamed, modified, subdivided or discarded with the purpose of searching for data arrangements (e.g. if some data belonged together or they referred to different events); therefore, as the analysis progressed, new codes or sub-codes were identified, needing to return to the data previously analysed so that these could be included (Bloor et al, 2001). As data was categorized, each category configuration was analysed seeking to describe its content and linkages with

other categories (Tesch, 1990) thus using what Strauss and Corbin (1998) name as axial coding. In this sense, axial coding was used to relate categories with their subcategories in order to develop a more complete and precise explanation. However, “it is important to note that we do not go through an entire document, put labels on events, and then go back and do a deeper analysis. The labels that we come up with ... are, in fact, the result of our in-depth detailed analysis of data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 110). The advantage of NUD-IST’s ability to produce code trees was exploited in order to plot the tentative logical relationships among categories in the continual process of data analysis and comparison. This repeated process was accompanied by the development of research memos and debriefings that represented the records of the data analysis, interpretations, questions, and directions for further data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These analytic memos and debriefings were used in the preparation of the case studies, in drawing conclusions about the data, in the analysis process and to reflect on the influence the researcher had on the overall evaluation process.

Finally, the advantages and disadvantages of following a qualitative data analysis process in this research are discussed. Weiss (1998b) argued that qualitative data analysis offers several advantages, such as:

- greater awareness of the perspectives of programme participants (stakeholders);
- understanding the dynamic developments of the programme;
- considering the programme context and its influence;
- entering to the evaluation scenario without predefined conceptions of the programme; and
- flexibility to face unanticipated events.

However, qualitative data analysis has some disadvantages such as:

- The time needed to learn how to use the software that aid in handling the data.
- The overall time that qualitative data analysis implies, from the initial stage of preparing transcripts to the codification, analysis and interpretation of the data.

In spite of these disadvantages, and in an effort to be coherent with the overall methodological approach designed for this research, it was decided to use qualitative data analysis to analyse the research data. With this intention in mind, it was decided to use case study as a way of presenting the information. The next section presents the reasons for that decision.

5.6 Method of organizing and presenting research outcomes

Yin (1994) defined a case study as an empirical inquiry that: “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident ... and relies on multiple sources of evidence” (p. 13). Case study design can be focused on single or multiple case studies and depending on the type of phenomenon studied, the case developed may be either embedded or holistic; an embedded case study takes into account subunits of analysis, and in contrast a holistic design examines the global nature of the case.

As noted by Bromley (1986) and Yin (1994), case studies have been used in areas as different as administration, anthropology, biochemistry, business studies, medicine, criminology, education, history, law, military studies, psychiatry, social work and sociology. They have been used to build up a complete record of the circumstances involved in specific situations (Bromley, 1986). Additionally, case studies have been used for various purposes, for example: (1) to explain causal links in real-life interventions; (2) to describe an intervention and the context in which it occurred; (3) to illustrate certain topics; (4) to explore particular situations of the intervention and (5) as meta-evaluation (Yin, 1994). Besides, Eisenhardt (1989) noted the use of case study as theory-testing and in particular she argues in favour of case study for the purpose of theory building.

In small business research, Holliday (1995) presented through case studies, an ethnographic research analysing three small firms. Other examples are Chetty (1996) who used case studies as way of studying the export performance of small and medium-sized firms and North, Blackburn and Curran (1998) who studied quality management in small businesses in UK. The reasons for deciding on the use of case study, as a way

of reporting the evaluation interventions in this research, were grounded on Guba and Lincoln's (1989) advice that the case study is the most useful format for an evaluation report. They argued that:

“the report cannot simply be *about* the evaluand and its context, but must enable readers to see *how the constructors make sense of it, and why*. The best way to do that, we feel, is via the case study report, which provides a vicarious experience of the situation, allowing the readers to ‘walk in the shoes’ of the local actors” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 223, italics in original).

Similar arguments have been made by Shadish, Cook and Leviton (1991) and Stake (1980). Guba and Lincoln (1981) also gave the following reasons for the use of case study:

- First, the case study can provide the “thick description” needed so that a person considers the setting and context where the evaluation took place and determine how appropriate it would be to use it in another setting and context.
- Second, the case study can provide an experiential perspective grounded in the data itself and its context.
- Third, the case study aims to be holistic and lifelike, presenting a credible picture to participants and audiences.
- Fourth, the case study can simplify and focus on the range of data to be considered.
- Fifth, the case study can focus the attention of readers more effectively.
- Finally, the case study can communicate more by building on the “tacit knowledge” of the readers, which is the practical knowledge derived from the previous experiences.

Yin (1994) noted as advantages of case studies that data can be collected from a variety of sources and that it allows the investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful character of real-life events.

However, some authors are not as enthusiastic as Guba and Lincoln regarding the use of case studies. The main criticism has been that it provides little basis for scientific generalization. In this respect, Yin (1994) argued that case studies “are generalizable to

theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (p. 10). He added that the case study does not represent a ‘sample’ where the intention is to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalizations) but the intention is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization). In relation to the use of case study as way of reporting the evaluation intervention, Patton (1987) argued that a final written report of an evaluation is one way of communicating findings but it is not always the most effective way. He noted that, “full evaluation reports don’t seem to get read much, and it’s very costly to write a final report” (p. 331). Patton’s pragmatic stand led him to focus on the use of evaluation and then to explore whether intended users considered a written evaluation report necessary. His arguments seemed attractive, in particular in liberating researchers from the burden of writing case studies; however, it is considered important to document and develop a case study about the intervention.

It is believed that, in this research project, the use of case studies was the most appropriate way of presenting the report of the evaluations. It was thought that case studies could help in contributing to the use of the evaluation results in the three ways described in chapter four (conceptual use, symbolic use and instrumental use). In this sense, it was thought that case studies could contribute to the conceptual use of the evaluation results, in particular, because it facilitated awareness of the stakeholders’ CC&I in relation to the programme, and of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme identified by the stakeholders. It was also considered that, in general, case study could contribute in the development of views, attitudes, and knowledge in relation to evaluation.

It was thought that reporting through case study could contribute to the instrumental use, by being a vehicle through which stakeholders’ CC&I can be portrayed and their recommendations for improvement reflected; thus impacting the future decisions of the programme and the decision-making process.

It was thought that the case study report could contribute to the symbolic use of evaluation, in the sense that it aimed to make reference to the CC&I of stakeholders involved in the evaluation process; thus taking into account stakeholders who make decisions in the programme, and stakeholders who are involved and form part of the

programme. Therefore, the case studies aimed at reflecting the different perspectives that stakeholders had about the programme.

The decision to use a case study, as the way of reporting the evaluation intervention, was based on the advantages it offered. In this respect, Chetty (1996) noted that in researching small and medium-sized firms in New Zealand, the case study method overcame the problems of conducting research in a country where there might not be enough firms to justify statistical generalizations or where response rates are low because resistance has been developed by firms being over researched.

Having decided on the use of case study as the way of reporting the evaluation intervention carried out in MSME development programmes, several decisions had to be made in relation to its design, such as decisions on developing single or multiple cases, and decisions on developing holistic or embedded cases (Yin, 1994).

Yin (1994) justified the decision to use single case study when the case represents a critical case for testing a theory or when it represents a rare or unique case or when it is a revelatory case. He added that carrying out multiple case studies is justified when each case serves a specific purpose within the overall scope of inquiry. As this research was not dealing with unique or critical cases in programmes for MSMEs, it was decided to use multiple case studies, because this research intended to operationalise the situationally responsive practical participatory evaluation (SRPPE) approach developed in Chapter Four. Additionally it was taken into account that often it is considered that the evidence multiple cases provide is stronger and the study is considered more robust (Yin, 1994).

Once it was decided to develop multiple case studies as way of reporting the interventions carried out in two MSME development programmes, the analysis of each of the programmes revealed several units of analysis. The units of analysis were represented by the different participants of the evaluation or programme stakeholders identified. Therefore, an embedded analysis was used to analyse each of the programmes for MSME development. Apart from the advantages of multiple cases noted previously, the use of an embedded design in the analysis offers, through the subunits, the opportunities of an extensive analysis and of enhancing the insight of the

cases. However, care has to be taken not to lose the holistic aspect of the cases (Yin, 1994).

5.7 Systematic protocol for data collection, handling and analysis

A systematic protocol for data collection, handling and analysis was developed with the intention of adding structure to the research project and helping to ensure the validity of the results. The systematic protocol (shown in Table 5.2) included the several steps followed to collect data, to verify data, to transcribe and handle data and to analyse and disseminate outcomes.

Table 5.2 Systematic protocol devised for data collection, handling and analysis

| |
|---|
| <p>Collection of data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduce the focus group (FG) session its objective and the research purpose. -Give each individual a chance to recollect personal opinions and listen to others. -Guide the FG session following the key questions related to the core topics of interest in the research. -End the FG session providing a final summary of key points and comments. |
| <p>Understanding of data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Follow a systematic step of participant verification, to ensure the intent of participant's intervention is understood, by giving an opportunity to participants to respond to the final summary of key points and comments. |
| <p>Capturing and handling the data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tape record the discussions and take notes to ensure the identification of speakers and the inclusion of non-verbal data. -Immediately after the FG session, make transcripts of the tape and include notes taken of non-verbal data. -Use NUD-IST computer programme for handling the information in order to systemize the work and to ensure that the analysis is done thorough and in a consistent way. |
| <p>Data analysis</p> <p>Systematic steps in analysing and coding the data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Review the purpose of the research -Study on detail the discussions (interaction, context and group dynamics). -Segment the discussion in units of analysis. <p><i>De-contextualization:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Analyse the units of analysis and attach a label (code) to ideas and phenomenon that emerge. -Define the code -Attach the same code when the idea or phenomenon appears again, and so on. -Revise the code definition assuring to include it characteristics (properties and dimensions). -Retrieve and review the information of codes. <p><i>Re-contextualization</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reassemble the information using Axial Coding. -Identify potential relationships |

5.8 Conclusions

This chapter presented an account of the methodology and methods of research chosen as appropriate for this research, considering their strengths and weaknesses. As previously stated, this research sought to consider intangible factors as a way of complementing the traditional evaluations approaches that have been used to evaluate programmes for MSMEs, in particular with the use of a Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach. A constructivist and interpretivist methodology was considered relevant for this research because of the importance placed on the perceptions of programme stakeholders about their CC&I (intangible factors). In order to collect data, nominal group techniques (NGT) and focus groups interviews were used. The analysis and interpretation of the information collected followed a qualitative data analysis approach. It was explained that this approach reflected a mixture of Tesch's (1990) description of research interested in the discovery of regularities and in seeking to discern meaning. Having explained the way of collecting and analysing the information, the chapter described how the data was to be presented. The reasons were presented for deciding on developing multiple embedded case studies as way of reporting and analysing the evaluation intervention carried out in two programmes for MSMEs.

The next chapter presents the interventions carried out in two programmes for MSMEs development programmes, making reference to the several decisions that had to be taken, the problems faced, how the researcher reacted in order to achieve credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Chapter Seven presents the particular settings of each case study conducted considering the Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach and the outcomes obtained from the intervention.

Chapter 6. The evaluation's intervention

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents how the Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach was put in practice to evaluate two programmes for MSMEs. The previous chapters highlighted the neglected importance given to intangible factors in evaluation; the over emphasis of the scientific paradigm to evaluate programmes for MSMEs; the lack of involvement of programme stakeholders in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs; and the failure in considering the heterogeneity of MSMEs and of the entrepreneur.

The SRPPE approach is proposed as a way of considering intangible factors in evaluation and of achieving three uses of evaluation (conceptual, symbolic and instrumental). In this way, the relevance the programme has for stakeholders can be maintained and can contribute to the improvement of the programmes. The arguments that support these ideas are based on the model developed in Chapter Four, where stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues (intangible factors) inform the four components (decision-making, political, learning and evaluators' characteristics) of the SRPPE approach. It is thought that the interrelation of these components provides a better picture that contributes to the conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation results.

In deciding which MSME programmes to work with, it was considered that most of the literature that supports participatory evaluation approaches has been developed within educational settings. With this in mind, the researcher was interested in programmes that offer support to MSMEs within educational contexts. Additionally, as noted by Yin (1994) the replication of cases is considered a major advantage of multiple case studies; therefore, the researcher was interested in having access to more than one MSME development programme. Because of the difficulties experienced during the fieldwork in contacting and working with different programmes that offer support to MSMEs, it was possible to research two MSME development programmes, both supporting

MSMEs within an educational context, with the intention of replicating the process carried out.

The first programme contacted was The Centre for Development Support (CDS). CDS offers a programme that seeks to support small enterprises through the development of projects called “Business Clinics”. The programme is run by a University (ITESM). The second programme contacted was the Mexican Entrepreneurship Development (DESEM). DESEM is a non-profit organization, which seeks to promote, in a practical way, the development of entrepreneurs and the acquisition of entrepreneurial knowledge and abilities (Sistema DESEM, 1993). One of the programmes DESEM offers is oriented towards the creation and development of new businesses (MSMEs). This programme called, Young Entrepreneurs, is offered in coordination with technical universities.

This chapter describes in details the actual interventions carried out in two Mexican programmes that support MSMEs development (CDS and DESEM). This chapter explains the programmes and how access to them was granted. It details the organization and practicalities of each intervention; how, first, the nominal group technique (NGT) was used to generate the questions for each intervention and then focus group interviews were used to evaluate each programme. This chapter also presents the actions taken after the fieldwork to give continuity to the evaluations and highlights how trustworthiness criteria were addressed in using the nominal group technique, focus groups and case studies.

6.2 Intervention of the first programme: The Centre for Development Support (CDS)

The Centre for Development Support (CDS) is a centre within a University (ITESM). The centre aims to link academic and the business communities. Its mission is to encourage community and regional development, and to contribute to the students’ and teachers’ development. ITESM has 30 campuses distributed in most of the States of Mexico. Ideally, each campus has its own Centre for Development Support (CDS). According to the characteristics of each region, CDS offers different programmes. Some

centres focus on the manufacturing industry, service or agriculture sectors. Others emphasise the promotion of exportations, while others emphasise social service. In addition to the different focuses of CDS, there are different ways of achieving the link between the academic and business communities. One is by providing technical assistance to MSMEs through consultancy carried out by teachers and students of specific courses. This research project focused only on one programme of the CDS of ITESM Toluca Campus.

Access

It is important to acknowledge why it was decided to evaluate one programme of CDS and how access to this organization was obtained. During 2000, the researcher worked at ITESM as a part time lecturer at the departments of Engineering and Administration. As a lecturer, the researcher had the opportunity to contact and participate in the CDS programme. As a result of her participation in the CDS programmes, she was interested in improving the programme through evaluation. During January 2002, the researcher went back to Mexico for the fieldwork and contacted the manager of CDS in order to find out if the centre was interested in improving their evaluations and programmes. They were.

During the first interview with the manager of CDS, the research was explained and an interest was expressed in doing an evaluation of the CDS programme. The following advantages of the evaluation approach proposed were explained: the possibility of having direct contact with business owner-managers, of identifying programme stakeholders' CC&I, of identifying the programme strengths and weaknesses and above all, of knowing the stakeholders' recommendations to improve the programme. It was noted that the intention of the evaluation was not to judge the programme, but to improve it. The researcher was not going to play the role of an expert but rather, of facilitator, and that the issues that the evaluation was going to address were those that programme stakeholders posed. Access to the programme was given after it was presented and discussed the research purpose, the methodology to be followed and identified the programme stakeholders and their involvement. It seems that the idea of a programme evaluation created anxiety in the programme manager; it was requested a list of issues and topics the research was to cover, and how the different sessions were to be carried out.

It was first considered doing the evaluation only with MSME owner-managers; however, other stakeholders of the programme were identified: students, teachers and the programme manager. Considering this and as the intention was to develop a participatory evaluation and to include all programme stakeholders in the evaluation (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), it was decided to widen the perspectives and the participation of the programme stakeholders so that students, teachers and the programme manager were included. Since CDS provide services to enterprises in coordination with different academic departments, it was decided to involve not only owner-managers but also to involve the programme manager, teachers and students. In this sense, the evaluation offered opportunities to hear the voices of the programme stakeholders involved and affected by the programme (see section 4.3.3).

After noting the advantages that the SRPPE approach could bring, the manager of CDS showed interest in the research. Meetings were held to learn more about the programme and to plan the practicalities of the evaluation.

In a second meeting, it was made clear that the intention of the research involved a change in the paradigm of how the evaluation was to be carried out; that the focus of the research was on the intangible factors that affect the programme stakeholders, in order to seek ways of improving it. Additionally, it was emphasised that the evaluation was not aimed at judging the programme, but was aimed at gaining information on the weaknesses and strengths of the programme that could help in improving it, and for it to be a learning experience for all the people involved in the evaluation. The importance of not only involving owner-managers but also involving teachers and students that were carrying or had previously carried out CDS projects in MSMEs was agreed. It was made clear her participatory approach to evaluation (in spite of not being so participative at expressing her interest), not bound to the scientific paradigm, and that the programme evaluation was to be driven by the programme stakeholders, with the researcher's role that of facilitator of the process. The rationale for this decision was grounded on the idea that the people involved in the programme knew the programme from inside, had contacts with the different stakeholders and had an experience with the programme; therefore, the researcher was less qualified to define an instrument to evaluate the CDS programme. These arguments were also used in the personal interviews carried out with

teachers, to present the evaluation approach and to encourage their involvement in the research.

The manager of CDS accepted the programme evaluation and agreed to help in the research project. Information on the enterprises, names of teachers and students with whom CDS currently or had previously carried out projects were provided. The two interviews with the CDS manager were tape-recorded and the transcripts were sent to the interviewee for purposes of clarification of any of the expressed ideas.

6.2.1 Practicalities of CDS' intervention

Having gained access to the programme, the intervention was carried out from January 2002 to May 2002. During this period, there were performed personal interviews, nominal group technique and focus group sessions as part of the methods used to collect information to evaluate the programme.

6.2.1.1 Personal interviews

Eleven initial personal interviews were carried out with teachers that were working or had worked in developing projects for businesses. Teachers were considered as the “gatekeepers” of the programme because, if they agreed to be involved in the research, they could also help in involving students and also owner-managers. It was intended in the interviews, briefly to explain to each teacher the research project; and to present them with the different programme evaluation perspective and the stages involved. Additionally, interviews were intended at detecting the kind of CC&I that teachers had from the programme; inviting them to get involved in the different stages of the evaluation, and eliciting their willingness to participate. At this stage, there were several challenges. Deans of faculties, professors, and teachers had busy agendas and their interest in the project was needed in order to gain their involvement, and to help in involving other stakeholders. Additionally, semester dates had to be considered, especially periods of exams and holidays, because if it was expected to have the different stakeholders' involvement in the evaluation, there should not be interference with such dates.

During the first eleven personal interviews with teachers, some CC&I started to emerge, such as:

-The need for a document that specifies CDS's purposes, mission, history, how it works, how it fits with in the educative system, in what context it works, what it offers and how much it charges (notes from an interview with a teacher that later participated in the definition of evaluation session, date:12-02-2002).

-The need for an evaluation to consider the different CDS's clients identified as: business owner-managers, students, teachers and CDS manager; having a focus groups session with each of them (date:12-02-2002).

-The desirability of doing separate focus group sessions between stakeholders, because two types of projects were developed:

- 1) Those CDS projects where charges for the service were made.
- 2) Projects developed in the same course, without being considered CDS projects, which were not charged for.

Advice was given to be careful in the involvement of students and owner-managers, because some courses had at the same time projects developed by CDS for which charges were made and projects that were not considered as part of CDS, for which charges were not made (notes from an interview with a teacher that had worked in the CDS programme and notes from two interviews with teachers that were later involved in the definition of evaluation session (date:12-02-2002)).

The intention of doing a SRPPE was presented to programme stakeholders (teachers considered as gatekeepers) through personal interviews. This could represent an intermediate step in the stages of Fourth Generation Evaluation (presented in Chapter Four) because the programme stakeholders had been identified previously. However, they were not yet involved in the process; rather, personal interviews served to inform about the type of CC&I that would emerge during the evaluation. Also, interviews helped in triangulating the information provided by the programme stakeholders. On the other hand, the advantages gained from using personal interviews were reflected in Patton's (1997a) stage of definition of intended use of evaluation and its focus by the evaluator and intended users. However, if taken literally, Patton assumed negotiation of the use and focus of the evaluation between the evaluator and intended users.

Nevertheless, such a negotiation process cannot be claimed in this research because, as noted throughout the research, the researcher's agenda was set on seeking through the operationalisation of the SRPEE approach, ways of improving the programme. Having noted that, what still remains in question is the acknowledgment of the influence the evaluator exercised in the process, considered as the component of evaluators' characteristics of the evaluation approach developed in Chapter Four.

6.2.1.2 Nominal Group Technique: Generating questions for the evaluation

Teachers having been identified as "programme gatekeepers", personal interviews with them helped to identify the kind of CC&I programme stakeholders were likely to rise during the evaluation research.

The programme stakeholders previously identified (teachers, students, owner-managers and CDS manager) were invited to a session in order to generate questions for the evaluation. The widening of the spectrum of the programme stakeholders involved in the evaluation made reference to the decision-making component of the evaluation approach developed in Chapter Four, involving issues such as the facilitator's control over the evaluation, the selection of programme stakeholders for participation and the depth of their participation.

The programme stakeholders were invited to be participants in the evaluation process through a letter (see example in Appendix 2). With the intention of optimizing time, the invitation letter included Patton's (1997a) idea of triggering questions. These questions helped programme stakeholders to reflect, in advance, on questions that would define the evaluation. The triggering questions were:

- What things are you interested in evaluating?
- What are the 10 things that we (as evaluators) do not know with certainty about the different actors in CDS (students, teachers, businesses and CDS management)?
- What type of changes would you like to see in the programme's clients?

The invitation informed participants of what the project was about, the importance of their participation, the purpose of the session, how it was going to be carried out and the expected outcomes. The invitation letters were delivered personally or through e-mail and participants were asked to reflect in advance on the triggering questions.

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) was used, as justified in Chapter Five, as a way of generating questions for the evaluation. This decision was taken because it was thought NGT presented a way of identifying stakeholders' CC&I; it allowed an organized brainstorm of questions and identified their level of importance, without getting engaged in the discussion of the questions or the proper evaluation of the programme.

In carrying out the session in order to generate questions for the evaluation, there were concerns about several things, for example: the number of participants that would attend, how to carry out a session if only one participant appeared, the general dynamic of the session, and the punctuality of participants. The session started on time with seven participants and a few minutes later, another participant arrived. In total, eight participants attended the session to generate questions for the evaluation.

As outlined in Chapter Five, during this session, a brief explanation of the intention of the evaluation was given, and this highlighted the importance of their participation in the session, how the session was going to be carried out using the Nominal Group Technique, what were the rules of the nominal group technique and how the outcomes of the session were to be used in the overall programme evaluation. The session continued by reflecting on the triggering questions. Participants' advance reflection on these questions speeded and facilitated this process. Participants of the session had 10 minutes to write the questions that would be used in the evaluation of the programme. The session lasted 90 minutes, and 49 questions were generated and clarified (following the NGT process detailed in Chapter Five). After the clarification stage, only 41 questions remained and were grouped in clusters.

It was presupposed that the questions generated in the NGT session were to be grouped in 3 main clusters: questions related to teachers, to enterprises and to students and a subgroup cluster of programme administration and finance questions. However, programme stakeholders organized the clusters differently, reflecting some of their

concerns and issues related to students, teachers, business owner-managers and the programme.

Table 6.1 presents the clusters, organized according to the level of importance given by the participants in the NGT session.

Table 6.1 Prioritized clusters for CDS programme evaluation

| Clusters |
|---|
| 1. CDS's mission |
| 2. CDS's information and policies |
| 3. CDS's evaluation |
| 4. CDS's projects evaluation procedures |
| 5. CDS's finances |
| 6. Students' expectations and policies |
| 7. Business owner-managers' expectations and policies |
| 8. Teachers' expectations and policies |

Following the systematic protocol devised for data collection presented in Chapter Five, the session was tape-recorded and a summary was produced and sent back to the participants in order to receive feedback from the session or any clarification of the ideas presented.

Focus group interviews were planned after the session, which defined questions for the evaluation. In organizing the focus group interviews, there were two options: either mixing stakeholders or making separate groups. Considering the suggestions made in the personal interviews with teachers and noting that some questions were specifically directed to a particular group of stakeholders, it was decided to make three focus groups: one focus group with students, one with business owner-managers and one with teachers. It was thought that by making separate focus groups, the particular CC&I of each group could emerge and be explored more clearly. Also, each group would deal with and comment on the questions related to them; confrontations between groups would be avoided in such a way that issues of power and inhibition to participate would be minimized (Carney, McIntosh & Worth, 1996; Chapple & Murphy, 1996). To make separate focus groups was thought to be useful during the process of evaluation,

because the participation of some stakeholders could be inhibited by the power that other stakeholders had, specifically in the teacher-student relationship.

In deciding which questions each focus group would address, the cluster organization was considered and participants of the NGT were consulted. Some questions were clearly intended for a particular group; therefore those questions were posed to the related stakeholders. However, in order to have a better picture of the programme, also same questions were also asked in different groups, allowing a comparison of perspectives and views between the different stakeholders and the triangulation of information. Therefore, the next stage was actually carrying out the focus groups with the CDS programme stakeholders.

6.2.1.3 Focus groups: Evaluating CDS programme

As highlighted previously, focus groups were suggested as a way of evaluating MSME development programmes. This technique was chosen because it allowed the interaction between participants, allowed identification of the dynamism of the relations created, identified and discussed stakeholders' CC&I and helped to generate ideas for improving the programme. A topic agenda was developed for each focus group. The topic agenda was developed with the intention of giving structure to the sessions (see example in Appendix 3). The agenda intended to facilitate a free-flowing discussion, and intended to focus the discussions to the topics that were identified through the NGT. Therefore, a reminder of the questions raised in NGT session was needed.

6.2.1.3.1 Focus group with students

Twenty one students were invited personally and through e-mail to participate in the CDS evaluation. Their names were collected from the list provided by CDS of students who, during that semester, were participating with CDS, and of students that in the past had participated in the CDS programmes. Also, names of students were given by teachers and by other students. The invitation was sent 15 days in advance and a reminder e-mail was sent to all students 2 days before the session. Additionally, participants of the NGT session were invited as observers of the focus group in order to

assure transparency in the evaluation process. The involvement of the observers was also considered a way of achieving credibility in the research data.

At this stage, there were concerns related to the number of participants that would decide to participate, their punctuality and the development of the focus group session. The session started on time with an attendance of nine students. This focus group session was characterized by a good atmosphere for discussion, and without confrontation. Although all the participants involved in the NGT session were invited to the focus group, because of various commitments only the CDS manager attended, and only for half the session. In the focus group discussion, there were no signs that the presence of the observer influenced the process.

The researcher started the session by introducing herself and thanking students and the observer for their attendance. As an ice-breaking strategy, students were asked to introduce themselves and to inform the group on which project and course they worked with the CDS programme. There was also interest in knowing the perspective students had of evaluation and to identify if the intention of doing a participatory evaluation was clear. She made it clear that the purpose of the evaluation was not to judge the programme but to improve it. Students were informed that the evaluation questions had been previously developed by other programme participants through NGT, who were invited as observers to that session and to the others focus groups sessions organized. As NGT does not allow discussion of the evaluation questions (see section 5.4.1), the focus groups were being used with this purpose. Focus group discussions were guided by the questions defined in advance in the NGT session; the questions posed in the students' focus group are presented in Appendix 4.

Because the purpose of the evaluation was to improve the programme, between questions students were encouraged to provide recommendations for improvement of the CDS programme; noting that the interest was not just in identifying what was needed to be improved, but taking a step forward in making recommendations of how things, in their view, could be improved.

Following the systematic protocol devised for collecting and handling data, presented in Chapter Five, it was summarized what was said about each question. This served the

purpose of checking the understanding of students' responses. In general the session was very participative, students showed an interest in the research; especially an interest in having their ideas taken into account and in seeking ways of improving the programme.

The focus group session lasted 75 minutes. Following the systematic protocol for collecting and handling the data, the session was tape-recorded with the approval of the participants, notes were taken from the session and a summary was produced. The summary was sent to all participants of the students' focus group asking for their comments, suggestions or clarification of the expressed ideas. As a way of keeping transparency in the evaluation process and as a way of informing previous participants of the progress of the evaluation, the summary was also sent to the first group that worked in the session which defined questions for the evaluations (NGT).

6.2.1.3.2 Focus group with owner-managers of MSMEs

The second focus group organized was with owner-managers of MSMEs. As it was previously noted, CDS sometimes worked with enterprises that were not MSMEs. The CDS programme was created, in theory, to provide services of support to MSMEs and this research was also focused on MSMEs. Therefore, for the purposes of the evaluation, MSMEs were considered the target group. Their names were identified in the list of businesses provided by CDS and by the names of businesses in which teachers and students have developed CDS projects.

Fifteen MSMEs owner-managers were invited to the focus group session (see example in Appendix 5), with 15 days of advance notice. An invitation letter was sent and the receipt of the letter was confirmed. Businesses that did not confirm receipt of the letter were sent an invitation by e-mail. A follow up and confirmation call was given to each of the MSMEs owner-managers three days before the session. Four owner-managers confirmed their attendance and another three expressed their intention and possibility of attending the session. The group of participants that helped in defining questions for the evaluation was invited as observers of the session. Aiming at facilitating business owner-managers' attendance, the session was programmed in the evening.

At the time the session was supposed to begin, only one business owner-manager was present and this meant that the focus group session could not be carried out. Faced with this problem, it was considered carrying out a personal interview in order to have an answer to the questions and recommendations of programme improvement. However, when the interview was about to start, two other owner-managers arrived.

The owner-managers focus group was carried out with three participants and, as observers, a teacher who participated in the session, which defined questions for the evaluation and the CDS manager were present. The ice-breaking strategy used in the students' session was also used. The dynamic of the group was not as good as that of students, since the number of participants was smaller than the recommended six to ten participants in the literature (Morgan, 1997). However, the three owner-managers participated in answering the questions and giving their recommendations for improvement. At the end of the session, the observers were asked to express their ideas regarding the importance of having MSMEs' owner-managers involved in the process, to highlight the things they considered relevant for the evaluation process and that were learnt through the evaluation approach used. The session helped: to identify MSMEs owner-managers' CC&I; to identify the strengths and weaknesses participants saw in the programme, and to identify recommendations for improvement of the programme. The questions asked in this focus group are presented in Appendix 4.

Considering the evaluation objective of seeking ways of improving the programme, between questions, owner-managers were encouraged to provide recommendations for CDS improvement. These were considered as direct guidance in the instrumental use of evaluation, because they represented the actions that participants involved in the evaluation considered necessary in order to improve the programme.

The session lasted 75 minutes. Following the systematic protocol devised for data collection and handling, presented in Chapter Five, the session was tape recorded with the approval of the participants and a summary was produced. The summary was sent to the participants of this focus group in order to have their feedback and additional comments they wanted to make. As done with the summary from the students' focus group, seeking transparency in the evaluation process and to inform previous

participants of the evaluation progress, the summary of this session was also sent to the participants who helped to define the questions for the evaluation.

The last focus group planned was with teachers who, at the time of the intervention, were working or that in the past had worked in the CDS programme.

6.2.1.3.3 Focus group with teachers

Seventeen teachers were invited to the focus group session of evaluation of the CDS programme, and the team who worked to define questions for the evaluation was also invited as observer. Seven days previous to the session, an invitation letter was given personally or through e-mail. Teachers were asked to confirm their attendance and a follow up visit was made to those that did not reply. Six teachers confirmed their attendance.

On the day of the session, only two teachers arrived. However, three teachers, who had previously helped to define the questions of the evaluation, were present as observers of the session. Therefore, it was decided to gain from their experience and to have a more dynamic session by inviting them also to participate in the teachers' focus group evaluation session. In total, therefore, five teachers were involved in this session; two of them were new to the evaluation project, three had previously been involved in the definition of questions for the evaluation and of those, one also had been present as observer to the focus group session with MSMEs owner-managers. On this occasion, although invited as observer, the CDS manager did not attend the session.

The session began in the same way suggested for the focus groups with students and MSME owner-managers. Teachers were asked to introduce themselves. However, as they knew each other, the intention was to find out which projects they were working on, at the time of the intervention, or had worked on in the past with CDS, and to find out their ideas of evaluation. A brief explanation was given of what the project was about and how the session was organized. The discussion was very participative; it helped to identify teachers' CC&I. It was felt at one point that teachers were so motivated to participate that they were asking questions in advance of what was planned. It seemed

that they were anxious to express their opinions but above all, to question the CDS programme. In the focus group session, teachers were also asked to identify the strengths and the weaknesses of the CDS programme and to suggest ways of improving it. The questions asked in the teachers' focus groups are presented in Appendix 4.

As was done in the other focus group sessions, between questions the teachers were encouraged to provide recommendations to improve the programme. The session lasted 70 minutes and following the systematic protocol for collecting and handling data, the session was tape-recorded with the approval of the group; however, they asked for some comments to remain confidential. A summary of the session was produced, and the summary was sent to the participants of this session. As done with the summary of previous focus group sessions, seeking transparency in the evaluation process and aiming at informing previous participants of the evaluation progress, the summary was also sent to the participants that helped to define the questions for the evaluation.

Several teachers expressed their regret at not being able to be present at the session; noting their willingness to participate, it was decided to organize another teachers' focus group session. To this second session were invited those teachers that did not participate in the first focus group and the team involved in the definition of evaluation. Four teachers attended the second focus group session, in addition to the CDS manager, who was present as observer of the session. The dynamic of the session was very good. It followed the same format as the previous session with teachers. However, because of the dynamic of the discussion, there was emphasis on other things. This second session also helped to identify teachers' CC&I; to note the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, and to highlight their recommendations for improvement. The questions asked in this second group were the same posed to the first focus group of teachers.

As with the previous focus groups sessions, teachers were encouraged to suggest ways of improving the programme. Also, following the systematic protocol for data collection and handling, the session was tape-recorded with the approval of the group and a summary of the session was developed. However, as the time for doing the fieldwork was almost finished, an e-mail including a summary from both teachers' focus groups was sent in order to receive their comments, feedback and suggestion of the session.

6.2.1.3.4 CDS manager's involvement in the intervention

The CDS manager was involved throughout the whole process of evaluation of the programme. As noted at the beginning, her approval was needed in order to carry out the evaluation. The CDS manager was informed about the intention of the evaluation and the process that was to be involved. The CDS manager was invited, as observer, to all the focus group sessions. The intention of having an observer was to reduce confrontation between participants, identified in the literature (Morgan, 1997). The CDS manager and the other observers involved were introduced as such, and although their presence could have influenced the discussion (although there were no signs of it) it was considered it offered more benefits to the evaluation. In this sense, in particular, the involvement of the CDS manager as observer of the focus groups was a strategy aimed at encouraging the use of the evaluation, by having the CDS manager hear the needs of the programme stakeholders. After the focus group sessions, personal interviews were arranged with the CDS manager to obtain her comments about the progress of the evaluation, about the information gathered from the stakeholders and to clarify the several issues raised. Additionally, personal interviews were used to ask the CDS manager the questions that were directed to her. The CDS manager reflected on the weaknesses and strengths of the programme; on the suggestions made for the improvement of the programme, and on the stakeholders' CC&I. Following the systematic protocol for data gathering and handling, the interviews were tape-recorded. The following paragraphs are extracts of the comments made by the CDS manager during one of the interviews, addressing the value that she saw in the evaluation intervention carried out:³¹

“I do think that the focus groups can be used as a way of evaluating the projects; where we can have their feedback not only on individual projects, but having a space to meet with the MSME owner-managers and know their points of view about the programme, and that they have contact with other businesses....”(Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, unit 47).

“I think it is really important to have these sessions frequently, ...more than applying an evaluation where they fill in boxes, is to have their feedback” (Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, unit 48).

“I think the sessions have been very good. For example, in the session with businessmen I think we gained more than if we had had a previous established

³¹ The interview was conducted in Spanish and the quotations are the researcher's translation into English.

format, and handed it to be filled in such an impersonal way. I think the experience is enriched when another businessman hears the comments and feedback from others (positive or negative)” (Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, units 49, 50).

“(Talking about the evaluation format previously used) ... an evaluation is more than filling a questionnaire. It is clear to me that an evaluation, with the work you have been doing ... besides improving the programme, is a forum for programme stakeholders, to provide reflections and recommendations, in a participative way” (Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, unit 56).

“And more than the quantitative side (of the evaluation) is the qualitative side: to know how participants feel, if I am the only one that knows all the information, why am I and the people participating? What benefits do we see in the programme? It is needed to justify the existence of the programme. I think that the programme should not be something that is imposed and I have to fulfil, but that I see some advantages, I see some benefits and they are shared with other programme stakeholders” (Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, unit 57).

“For me this is very relevant (the intervention carried out). In fact, these conclusions that have been generated after the sessions, ...for me, are very valuable in order to suggest ways of improving and to improve the programme” (Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, unit 60).

6.3 Intervention of the second programme: DESEM (Mexican Entrepreneurship Development)

There was an interest in having more than one programme evaluated with the Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach, with the intention of having more experience in putting into practice the evaluation approach and with the intention of learning from different interventions. Several attempts were made to gain access to a programme run by a national development bank (NAFIN). However, because of what was seen as “bureaucratic procedures”, an evaluation process could not be proposed. There were several problems: First, it was a governmental national programme. Second, the main office was in Mexico City. Third, approval for any kind of intervention had to be given by the general director. Several e-mails were exchanged with a person that worked in the main offices. Unfortunately, it was not possible to arrange an evaluation intervention in one of their programmes. The researcher continued seeking for another programme and gained access to the DESEM programme.

DESEM- Mexican Entrepreneurship Development- is a non-profit organization, subsidiary of Junior Achievement International, which offers in different regions of

Mexico, several programmes that seek to promote, in a practical way, the development of entrepreneurs and the acquisition of entrepreneurial knowledge and abilities (Sistema DESEM, 1993). DESEM-Estado de Mexico offers, among different programmes, one oriented towards the creation and development of new businesses (MSMEs). This programme, called Young Entrepreneurs (Jóvenes Emprendedores), follows an educative model supported by the partnership between technical universities and businesses. DESEM-Estado de Mexico seeks the formation of young entrepreneurs by aiding in the practical process of appreciation and better understanding the role of business in the society.

Access

This programme was recommended by several teachers that were involved in the first programme contacted (the CDS programme). A first interview with the programme director was arranged to know more about their programme, to explain the research project and to explain what was being done in the CDS programme. The DESEM director knew about the CDS programme and in fact, both organizations had organized together a symposium for entrepreneurs.

During the first interview with the DESEM managers, it was noted that this was a programme run nationally, and that it had several fixed indicators to compare the performance between offices; however, each office was economically independent. The intention of making a participatory evaluation of the DESEM programme was presented to the programme general manager and to the operational manager. The DESEM managers were interested in the SRPPE approach and in particular, in involving in the process the different programme stakeholders (identified as young entrepreneurs, university coordinators, and programme managers). The programme managers knew about the evaluation that was being undertaken in the CDS programme and showed an interest in being involved in the research. A second meeting was scheduled for the next day, to discuss in detail the evaluation approach, the work done in the programme and the arrangements that needed to be made 'immediately' to carry out the evaluation. There was time pressure to conduct the CDS evaluation because the cycle of the programme was due to finish in one month. This second meeting revealed several complications faced in the evaluation:

- a) A programme council³² had to approve our intervention.
- b) The programme was run in coordination with several technical universities in different cities (7) some as far from each other as 5 hours driving.
- c) The activities of the programme were going to be finished in 20 days. Therefore, this was the only time that we had to evaluate the programme, because after that, it would be difficult to get people to work together, and the programme managers would be working again in recruiting universities with whom to work during the next semester.

DESEM managers showed a real interest on the intervention and offered to help, as much as possible, in the different activities, so it was decided to start the evaluation process. A letter was sent to the DESEM programme council, giving information about the research project, its objectives, and the stages involved, and asking for their approval in working with the Young Entrepreneurs programme. Additionally, letters were sent to each of the technological universities' directors, to inform them about the research project and ask for their consent to participate. Approval was granted from the programme council and the technological universities directors, so the intervention could start.

6.3.1 Practicalities of DESEM's intervention

This intervention was different to the previous one, because the conditions were different and more constraints needed to be addressed. In the previous intervention, the programme was run only in one place and there was direct access to the programme stakeholders; while the second programme was run in seven different cities, making the access to the programme stakeholders difficult and the time constraints were more severe.

DESEM programme managers and the researcher thought of ways of working things out. As programme managers were going to visit each of the technological universities, they thought the researcher could join them to organize with each group of young entrepreneurs a session to define questions for the evaluation. The programme managers

³² A body in charge of supervising and approving DESEM's activities; administrating and acquiring resources for the programme and of creating links with governmental agencies that support SMEs.

also offered to call a general meeting with the university coordinators in order to organize a separate session, to find out what questions they were interested in having considered in the evaluation. The programme managers also noted that the only day available to get all people together, from the different cities, was the day of the closure of the programme. Therefore, on that day, the focus group sessions would be organized, one with young entrepreneurs, and another one with university coordinators.

However things did not happen as planned. The visits to each of the technological universities were cancelled due to the busy agendas of the universities at that time and due to difficulties in scheduling them. Faced with the impossibility of visiting all the technological universities, it was decided to organize the session to define the questions of the evaluation only with young entrepreneurs of one of the technological universities. It was still planned to invite the university coordinators to a general meeting where a session would be organized to identify their questions. These would later be integrated into the young entrepreneurs' session where questions for the evaluation were defined. Nevertheless, time was passing and this general meeting was not organized, again due to the several engagements of the university coordinators. Therefore, it was decided to invite one university coordinator to a session to define questions for the evaluation, together with some young entrepreneurs.

6.3.1.1 Nominal Group Technique: Generating questions for the evaluation

Having identified the university coordinator as the “gatekeeper” of the programme, an invitation letter was sent in order to inform her about DESEM’s interest on having a participatory evaluation of their programme. It was impossible to have a prior personal interview with her. The letter briefly explained the purpose of the research; the process that would be followed in the session and how the outcomes of it would be used in the overall evaluation. The university coordinator extended the invitation to the young entrepreneurs, to attend the session in order to define questions for the evaluation of the programme.

The NGT to define questions for the evaluation of the programme took place within the technological university premises. In the session were five young entrepreneurs, one university coordinator, one university advisor (a new post from the university to have links with the programme), and the DESEM managers (the general director and the project manager). The session was organized with the intention of defining the evaluation questions of the DESEM programme as done in the first programme using NGT; however, in the introduction of the session the university coordinator said that the purpose of the session was to hear young entrepreneurs' perceptions and experiences in relation to the DESEM programme. Therefore, the logistic of the session had to change slightly. First, the NGT was used to define the stakeholders' questions for the evaluation and then programme stakeholders were encouraged to share their experiences and perceptions of the programme.

The session started well. However this group had not previously reflected on the triggering questions, as was the case with the previous programme, and the participants struggled to define evaluation questions. More time was given to the group to reflect and to write the questions on separate sheets of paper. When it was noticed that the group was not concentrating on the session, each participant was asked to read aloud their own questions and to stick them in the blackboard. This was a time consuming activity, but caught the attention of the group.

In general, the dynamic went well; there were 54 questions generated. Following the process involved in the NGT, presented in Chapter Five, questions were clarified. Ten questions were found repetitive and therefore they were eliminated, 8 clusters were generated and their relevance was rated. Because the time between this session and the focus group session (intended at carrying out the evaluation) was short, participants were asked to identify who could answer the question or to whom the question was directed (either young entrepreneurs, university coordinators or/and the DESEM managers). Table 6.2 shows the generated clusters organized by levels of importance given by the participants in the session.

Table 6.2 Prioritized clusters for DESEM programme evaluation

| Cluster |
|---|
| 1. DESEM's administration |
| 2. DESEM's diffusion |
| 3. DESEM's follow-up of projects |
| 4. Programme development |
| 5. Support from the technological university |
| 6. Young entrepreneurs participating in the programme |
| 7. The entrepreneurial advisor |
| 8. The academic advisors |

As mentioned previously, in the introduction of the session it was said that it was also intended to hear the participants' views about the programme. Therefore, the session was extended to hear the stakeholders' comments. Participants were asked to share their experiences of the programme; to note the principal problems they faced and also to suggest ways of improving the programme. Following the systematic protocol for data collection and handling, presented in Chapter Five, the session was tape-recorded with the approval of the participants and a summary was produced. The summary was sent to the group asking for their comments of the session and for any clarification needed.

In summary, this session allowed the definition of questions for the evaluation of the programme and also the identification of programme stakeholders' CC&I. In this sense, it was different from the previous programme, where personal interviews were also used. In spite of the session being intended for generating the evaluation questions, it allowed the sharing of experiences of the different stakeholders, by noting some of the problems they faced and the suggestions they had for ways of improving the programme. The next step was to deal with the logistics of organizing the focus group sessions.

6.3.1.2 Focus groups: Evaluating DESEM programme

After the session in which questions for the evaluation were defined, a meeting was organized with the programme general director and with the project manager to make the arrangements for the focus group sessions. The only opportunity available to carry out the focus groups was during the closure of the programme. CDS managers informed when the young entrepreneurs from 7 different cities were going to arrive at the hall prepared for the closure of the programme, where an official ceremony would take place.

The president of the DESEM programme council was to give a speech, another speech was going to be given by the DESEM general director and certificates of participation of the programme were to be given out.

The appointments to carry out the focus groups were made after the closure; one with a group of young entrepreneurs and another one with university coordinators. The problem faced was how to have the two focus groups session on the same day without delaying too long the groups' trip back to their cities (as noted previously, some of the participants had to travel 5 hours back to their cities). The aid of another facilitator was required to coordinate one the focus group session. In that way, two focus groups could be run simultaneously; additionally, the focus groups were tape-recorded, so it was possible to hear and work with the information from both sessions. As the researcher had previously worked in the session of definition of evaluation with some of the young entrepreneurs and heard some of the problems they had and their suggestions, the decision was taken for the researcher to carry out the focus group session with the university coordinators, leaving the focus group with young entrepreneurs to the other facilitator.

6.3.1.2.1 Focus group with university coordinators

University coordinators were informed, in advance, of the evaluation of the programme. They were notified that after the closure, two separate evaluation sessions were going to be carried out, one with them and another one with young entrepreneurs. University coordinators helped by inviting young entrepreneurs to be involved in the focus group session. The decision to have separate focus groups session was grounded, again, on the intention of avoiding confrontations between groups and as a way of dealing with issues of power between participants and of participation inhibition (Carney, McIntosh & Worth, 1996; Chapple & Murphy, 1996). At the closure of the programme an announcement was made inviting the young entrepreneurs and the university coordinators to be involved in the separate sessions to evaluate the programme.

The researcher facilitated the focus group with 4 university coordinators. University coordinators showed interest in participating in the evaluation and in seeking ways of

improving the DESEM programme. In the session, the university coordinators' CC&I were identified; additionally, strengths and weaknesses of the programme were noted and ways of improving the programme were suggested. In this sense, considering the SRPPE approach, aiming at seeking ways of improving the programme and ways of encouraging the use of the evaluation, the recommendations made were considered as direct guidance to the instrumental use of evaluation because they represented the actions considered necessary to be taken in order to improve the programme. The questions asked in the university coordinators' focus groups are presented in Appendix 6.

In spite of the questions answered, due to the atmosphere in which the session took place, (in a big hall where people were going and coming, as well as to the time constraints) a deep level of analysis and reflection of the questions was not achieved. Following the systematic protocol of data collection and handling presented in the previous chapter, the session was tape-recorded with the approval of the participants, a summary was produced and it was sent to the participants of the session and to DESEM managers in order to have their feedback and comments about the session and to give transparency to the evaluation process.

6.3.1.2 Focus group with young entrepreneurs

As noted previously, the young entrepreneurs group was facilitated by another person; this person had previous experience of group dynamics and interviews, and knew about the process of carrying out a focus group. Despite the conditions that led to the involvement of another focus group facilitator, this could be considered a sign of the control the researcher was willing to give away in the research. As a guide to the session, the second facilitator received the topic agenda directed to this group and it was explained the dynamic followed in the previous focus group sessions. The importance of giving young entrepreneurs an introduction to what the research was about, where the questions came from and the importance of their involvement was noted. Additionally it was noted that another, simultaneous session, with university coordinators was being carried out.

The group had the participation of three young entrepreneurs. The questions asked in the young entrepreneurs' focus groups are presented in Appendix 6. Following the systematic protocol for data collection and handling, the session was tape-recorded with their approval. Young entrepreneurs' CC&I were identified and the programme strengths and weaknesses were noted. With the overall intention of the evaluation in seeking ways of improving the programme, young entrepreneurs were encouraged to suggest way of improving it.

When the sessions had finished a group of young entrepreneurs, previously involved in the definition of questions for the evaluation, noted that they had invited four other young entrepreneurs and that they also wanted to participate in the evaluation process. A second focus group session was carried out with seven young entrepreneurs, having as observer one of the university coordinators. Following the format of the previous session with young entrepreneurs, questions were posed, young entrepreneurs reflected on their involvement in the programme, again the strengths and weaknesses of the programme were noted and the group was encouraged to provide recommendations for improvement. It was considered that the information from the second focus group could complement the information previously collected and could aid in the process of triangulation of information. Following the systematic protocol for data collection and handling, this session was also tape-recorded with the approval of the group. In order to have feedback on the sessions, to receive any clarification of the expressed ideas and to give transparency to the process, a summary of both focus group sessions was prepared and sent to DESEM managers and to the university coordinators. The summary could not be sent to the young entrepreneurs directly, but was sent through the university coordinators.

6.3.1.2.3 DESEM managers' involvement in the intervention

As noted previously, DESEM managers were involved throughout the whole intervention carried out in the programme. They worked closely in organizing the different sessions. They were invited to the session in which questions for the evaluation were designed and to the focus group sessions as observers. The intention of

their involvement as observers of the sessions was to reduce the problem of confrontation between participants, identified in the literature (Morgan, 1997), and as a strategy to encourage the use of the evaluation, by having DESEM managers acknowledge the needs of programme stakeholders.

DESEM managers were kept informed of the progress of the evaluation and summaries of the sessions were sent. After the focus group sessions, a final interview was arranged with DESEM managers to discuss the evaluation carried out, to reflect on the things that the evaluation help them to note, and to ask, if after the evaluation was carried out, they planned to make any changes. This was done in order to identify the value the managers saw in the intervention. They expressed that the evaluation made them question several procedures they were carrying out, such as having an Entrepreneur advisor, and the communication and diffusion procedure they had. The managers noted that they were going to consider the recommendations made by the several groups and that they intended to make changes, such as abolishing the post of entrepreneur advisor, or seeking ways of improving that role.

Appendix 7 presents a detailed schedule of the activities carried out during the fieldwork.

6.4 After the fieldwork

As previously noted, the fieldwork was carried out during five months. During these months there was direct contact with the stakeholders of the two programmes, and dealt with the several problems that emerged when planning and conducting the evaluations. However, it is important to acknowledge that the interest of the researcher, her presence and her insistence influenced a lot in the way things developed and in they way things were done. Programme stakeholders were informed that, in spite the period of fieldwork finished, she would continue with the research and would inform them about developments in the research.

Keeping in touch with CDS programme stakeholders was easy, because all of them had continuous access to e-mail.

-One month after the end of the first intervention, an article reporting that a situationally responsive practical participatory evaluation of the CDS programme had taken place, was published in ITESM internal magazine (“Evaluación de Programas,” 2002).

-Six months after the evaluation of CDS, preliminary documents of the evaluation and its recommendations for improvement were sent to the CDS manager. It was agreed that these articles would be published in the ITESM internal magazine as way of informing the community and programme stakeholders about the evaluation. However, the researcher has not yet been informed about the publication of these documents.

-Six months after the evaluation of the CDS programme, these preliminary evaluation documents were also sent to all programme stakeholders who participated in the evaluation process, in order to obtain their feedback of the overall process, to receive their comments on what was expressed, and to identify whether any of the recommendations had been adopted. In total, twenty six e-mails were sent to students, teachers and MSME owner-managers. There were received some replies by e-mail and promises of future replies; however, so far only 2 teachers have replied with comments on the documents.

The second programme presented a more challenging situation of communication. It was only possible the communication with the programme managers because they are the only ones that had access to e-mail.

In summary, in spite of the difficulties faced due to distant communication, efforts were made to send to all the CDS programme participants and at least to the DESEM programme managers, the case study developed in this research about the evaluation of the programmes. This was done in order to have their feedback and comments.

Having presented, in detail, the way the two interventions were carried out and the actions taken in order to give continuity to the fieldwork, the following section focuses on the way trustworthiness criteria were addressed in the research design.

6.5 Trustworthiness criteria in the intervention

Chapter Five presented the reinterpretation, for constructivist inquiry, of the four major criteria of rigour used in scientific research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1989). It was argued that these criteria could help to ensure the overall adequacy of the research. The following sections discuss how these criteria were addressed in the research design used to carry out the research interventions.

6.5.1 Trustworthiness criteria addressed in NGT

Credibility

Issues of trustworthiness, presented in Chapter Five, were addressed while planning and conducting NGT in the interventions carried out. In this sense, in the stage of definition of evaluation of each of the interventions, credibility was addressed by being honest with the participants about the purpose of the NGT, by involving the participants in all stages of the NGT: the generation of ideas, the clarification of ideas, the organization of clusters and the prioritization of clusters. Credibility was enhanced by recording the sessions and sending to all the participants a detailed report of the session, the process carried out and the outcomes. Additionally, credibility issues were addressed in the process by the unobtrusive role played by the researcher, who let the stakeholders' questions emerge in order to guide the evaluation.

Transferability

It is acknowledged that NGT was an appropriate technique in order to generate questions for the evaluation. At the same time, it is acknowledged that the use of NGT for this purpose depends very much on the context in which it is applied. Therefore, the use of NGT to generate questions for evaluations is only transferable to similar situations.

Dependability and Confirmability

Issues of dependability and confirmability were addressed in the NGT by placing emphasis on the context where NGT was used. Apart from using NGT to identify programme stakeholders' CC&I, personal interviews with stakeholders helped to

corroborate the general CC&I addressed through NGT. Chapple and Murphy (1996) used similar corroboration techniques in their research which, explored alternative approaches to the collection of students' evaluation data. They compared items generated during the nominal group evaluation session with those identified by semi-structured interviews and concluded that the comparison confirmed that NGT can “successfully identify individual student reactions to teaching and learning experiences that are only partially uncovered by evaluation questionnaires, but which can be corroborated through individual in-depth interviews” (Chapple & Murphy, 1996, p. 151).

6.5.2 Trustworthiness criteria addressed in focus groups

Credibility

In the use of focus groups, issues of trustworthiness were addressed. Krueger (1994) noted, in relation to the validity of focus groups results, that “focus groups are valid if they are used carefully for a problem that is suitable for focus group inquiry” (p. 31). He suggested several ways of assessing the validity; one is through *face validity*, which means that results look valid. Another way is through *predictive or convergent validity*, which means that the results are confirmed by other behaviours, experiences or events. To ensure that the results of focus groups are trustworthy and valid, Krueger (1998) suggests following a protocol. This protocol includes, before the study: to listen to the conditions participants need for free and open sharing. During the study: to listen carefully to participants, observing how they answer and seeking clarification in areas of ambiguity and at the conclusion of the focus group, to make summary comments and to ask participants to verify them. In the use of focus groups, in the two interventions carried out during the fieldwork, these suggestions were followed and are also reflected in the systematic protocol for data collection and handling presented in Chapter Five. In this sense, it was important to organize different focus groups for different stakeholders (students, business owner-managers and teachers in the CDS programme and young entrepreneurs and university coordinators in the DESEM programme) due to the privacy and confidence participants needed to make their comments and also due to the freedom they would have to explore their issues in more depth. Also, during the conduct of the focus groups, discussions were tape-recorded in order to have complete attention to the

comments, to observe the attitudes of the participants, and to identify and seek clarification where needed. Additionally, the sessions concluded with a summary of the comments made, with the purpose of verifying that it was understood what participants said and as an opportunity for participants to add extra comments on the issues discussed. Finally, as a way of seeking verification of the information, summaries of the sessions were prepared and sent to focus groups' participants.

Transferability

In relation to the generalizability of the focus group results, Krueger (1994, 1998) noted that the purpose of using focus groups research is to understand reality and the way respondents perceived the problem. He considers that focus groups provide a clearer understanding on how issues are understood by respondents. However, he suggested instead of generalizability, seeking the transferability of concepts. That is, a person who wants to use the results should examine the research methods, the audience, the context, and consider if these situations and conditions are similar to the new environment (Krueger, 1998).

So far, this section has presented the way trustworthiness criteria were addressed in collecting research data. Although the next chapter presents the two case studies developed to report the evaluations carried out as part of this research project, it seems appropriate also to present in this section the way trustworthiness criteria were addressed in developing both case studies.

6.5.3 Trustworthiness criteria addressed in developing case studies

In the development of the multiple embedded case studies (presented in Chapter Seven), issues of trustworthiness were addressed. Yin (1994) referred to them as to construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. As noted in Chapter Five, these terms have been reinterpreted (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) in terms of credibility, transferability and dependability. However, Yin made reference to the terms as used in the scientific paradigm. Therefore, the discussion that follows respects the terms used by Yin (1994).

Yin (1994) recommended several case study tactics for constructing validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. He suggested (1) using multiple sources of evidence; (2) establishing a chain of evidence and (3) having the draft case study report reviewed by key informants, in order to construct validity (similar suggestions were made by Stake (1995)). In this respect, Yin made reference to the use of multiple sources of evidence (e.g. documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation), which he regarded as the major strength of case study, in order to address a broader range of issues. Additionally, he noted that the use of multiple sources of evidence is strengthened if triangulation is implemented in order to corroborate facts "...any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information" (Yin, 1994, p. 92). In relation to establishing a chain of evidence (a principle used to increase the reliability of information), what Yin suggested is that the case study should reflect the derivation of any evidence from initial stages up to the ultimate case study conclusions. Finally, he noted that having the draft report of the case study reviewed by the participants and informants of the case is related to the overall quality of the study (Yin, 1994). Stake (1995) noted that little feedback may be received in this "member checking" of the case study; however, he considered it as necessary and, when received, member checking contributes to the improvement of the cases.

This research took into account these recommendations, by using as multiple sources of evidence, the information collected through nominal group technique (NGT), focus group interviews and personal interviews; thus seeking credibility in the information. Additionally, with the purpose of corroborating facts (triangulation) the same questions were posed to different programme stakeholders or were addressed in different methods of data collection. In relation to the transferability of the findings, referred to by Yin (1994) as external validity, he recognized that the generalization of the findings has been strongly challenged in cases studies. He argued that the problem lies in a misconception of the notion of generalizing to other case studies. In case studies, instead of seeking statistical generalization, the analyst should seek analytical generalizations; this is to generalize to some broader theory. In this research the transferability of the findings is directed to the participatory evaluation theory and in particular to theory and practice of MSME programme evaluation. In relation to the dependability criteria, referred to by Yin as reliability, he suggested the development of

a case study protocol that contains the general rules and field procedures that were followed in the collection and analysis of the information. In addition, he noted that the case study protocol is essential in multiple-case design. The case study protocol devised for this research has been presented, in Chapter Five, through the methods used in the collection and data analysis.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented how the Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach was put into practice in two interventions. The different stages followed in the two separate interventions were detailed; from the first contacts and interviews with programme managers; the identification of programme stakeholders; the use of nominal group techniques as a way of generating evaluation questions that reflected stakeholders' CC&I; to the use of focus groups as way of dealing with and addressing those stakeholders' CC&I and the activities carried out in order to give continuity to the fieldwork. This chapter also noted how trustworthiness criteria were addressed in the research design. Chapter Nine reflects on some of the weaknesses of the described interventions.

The following chapter reports, in the form of case studies, the interpretation from the data collected. These case studies, developed using grounded theory and micro-analysis, reflect the conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation which the SRPPE approach aims to promote.

Chapter 7. Case Studies

7.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, it was stated that this research sought to improve MSME development programmes, by involving the stakeholders of programme and by considering intangible factors, frequently neglected, in the evaluation of programmes. The intangible factors represented the claims, concerns and issues (CC&I) that programme stakeholders had about the programme. As defined in Chapter Two, *claims* are programme stakeholders' favourable assertions related to the programme, *concerns* are any matters of interest to programme stakeholders that are unfavourable assertions about the programme and *issues* are declarations of disagreement between programme stakeholders (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1989). Chapter Four presented the situationally responsive practical participatory evaluation (SRPPE) approach to evaluate programmes for MSMEs, and Chapter Five provided the arguments which supported using case studies as a way of reporting the results from evaluations.

In order to operationalise the SRPPE approach, during January 2002 and May 2002 two interventions (described in Chapter Six) were carried out in order to evaluate programmes that provided support to MSMEs in Mexico.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the case studies that resulted from the intervention carried out in the CDS programme and the DESEM programme during the fieldwork of this research. The case studies are organized around the three uses of evaluation identified in Chapter Four, as the intention of operationalising the SRPPE approach was to promote the conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation.

- Conceptual use, i.e. evaluations performed in order to learn about the programme being evaluated.
- Symbolic use, i.e. evaluations performed in order to understand and deal with the political (power-related) stances of the programme and in persuasive areas of the evaluation.

- Instrumental use, i.e. evaluations performed in order to aid decision-making and action-taking (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991; Weiss, 1986).

By developing the conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation the case studies aimed to put forward an agenda of negotiation between programme stakeholders, as they presented their different views, unveiled different interests and examined the conditions and complexity of the issues raised in the evaluation.

The following case studies start with a brief explanation of the programme evaluated and with the identification of the stakeholders of the programme. Each case study presents the way participants were involved in the programme by identifying the conditions, actions and consequences of their involvement. Each case study then explores the conceptual use of evaluation by identifying the particular claims, concerns and issues of programme stakeholders. The symbolic use of evaluation is explored by identifying the programme general issues. The instrumental use of evaluation is explored by presenting the recommendations of programme stakeholders. Each case study concludes with a discussion. Finally, this chapter concludes by presenting a comparison between the outcomes of the two case studies, with a focus on the context of each programme and the conditions that surrounded the evaluations.

7. 2 CASE STUDY 1: Supporting established MSMEs

Structure of case study 1

As a guide to the reader, case study 1 is structured in the following way:

- Section 7.2.1 introduces the CDS programme and presents its general characteristics. This section identifies students, business owner-managers and teachers as the CDS programme stakeholders and its subsections detail the involvement of each of the stakeholders of the CDS programme.
- Section 7.2.2 presents the conceptual use of evaluation by identifying the particular CC&I of the different stakeholders in relation to their involvement in the CDS programme.
- Section 7.2.3 presents the symbolic use of evaluation by identifying and developing six general issues of the CDS programme. In developing each of

these general issues the different opinions that programme stakeholders had are presented. CDS general issues were: Information about the CDS programme (section 7.2.3.1); teachers' supervision and involvement as against non-supervision and non-involvement of teachers (section 7.2.3.2); involvement as against non-involvement of CDS in the development of projects (section 7.2.3.3); implemented projects as against non-implemented projects (section 7.2.3.4); business owner-managers sharing as against non-sharing information (section 7.2.3.5) and development of projects in large enterprises (section 7.2.3.6).

- Section 7.2.4 presents the instrumental use of evaluation by identifying the recommendations that CDS stakeholders made to improve the programme. Each of its subsections refers to the recommendations made in relation to CDS general issues.
- Section 7.2.5 concludes the CDS case by presenting a discussion of the outcomes of the case study.

7.2.1 The Centre for Development Support (CDS) Programme

The Centre for Development Support (CDS) offered a programme which sought to support small enterprises through the development of projects called "Business Clinics". The programme was run by a University (ITESM), and the support consisted in carrying out projects as part of established university courses, in which students, teachers and a representative person from the enterprise where the project is developed were involved. The programme started in 1995 as an answer to the lack of programmes to support small firms ITESM had.

CDS had as its mission to implement and develop links between students and teachers' knowledge and enterprise needs. CDS sought to develop abilities, attitudes and values in students and teachers which could have an impact on enterprises and organizations in their community. CDS also sought to generate a strong and new identification between ITESM with its community (Vicerrectoría académica del ITESM, 1999).

At the time of the intervention, the CDS programme offered in campus Toluca was managed by one person. Twelve teachers of different university departments and two

hundred students on different undergraduate degree programmes worked in twenty five projects.³³

The CDS programme goal was to develop real life projects for enterprises as part of university courses, in which a group of students and a teacher were involved during a semester. The programme was directed to different university degrees (e.g. industrial engineering, mechanical engineering, business administration, and marketing) and projects covered a variety of areas such as marketing research, production management, facilities layout, statistical quality control and business finances.

Previous procedure for evaluating CDS programme

The procedure which was used to evaluate the projects developed through this programme was a questionnaire that owner-managers answered. As explained by the manager of CDS (personal interview with CDS manager, date 20-05-2002), this evaluation questionnaire was handed out, the day students presented the project to the teacher and to the business owner-manager. The questionnaire had multiple choice answers with a scale from 1 (excellent) to 5 (bad) and 6 (with no opinion). The questionnaire addressed four main issues:

- 1) The final presentation of students.
- 2) The depth in which the students treated the problem (the topic).
- 3) The application of the topic of the project.
- 4) The fulfilment of project objectives.

In relation to the final presentation made by students, two questions were included, one referring to the oral expression and another to the use of techniques of support in the presentation. The second issue explored whether the students developed the project appropriately. The third issue was whether the students had addressed the specific needs of the enterprise. The fourth main issue explored was whether the students had fulfilled, on time, the defined objectives of the project. Finally, an open-ended section was included for adding comments (see Appendix 8).

³³ Information from a personal interview with CDS programme manager, date: 08-02-2002.

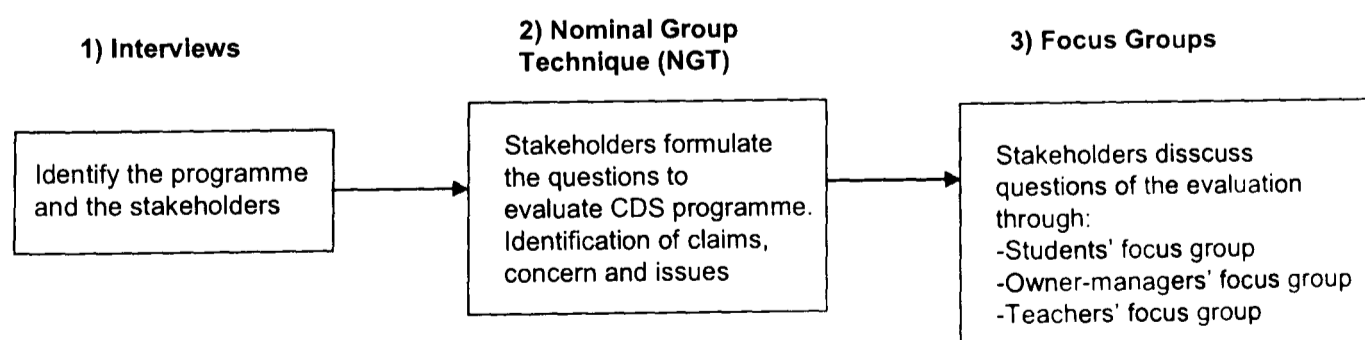
The manager of CDS also noted the existence of a performance index which compared the programme's performance with other programmes offered in other campuses of ITESM. This index referred to the number of students and teachers that were involved in the CDS programme, the number of projects developed, the number of firms involved, type of businesses, and the percentage of students involved in the programme who were about to graduate (considered as the main index of the programme).

Evaluation procedure proposed in this research

In order to involve the different programme stakeholders in the evaluation of the CDS programme, the research concentrated not only on MSME owner-managers, as had initially been anticipated, but also on those people that were involved in the development of projects, identified as the manager of CDS, teachers and students. Stakeholders' involvement encouraged participants to drive the evaluation, in the sense that the questions that were addressed in the evaluation were those that stakeholders posed. Therefore, the nominal group technique (NGT) was used to identify the stakeholders' questions. Focus groups were used to answer the evaluation questions. Because the questions posed were directed to different stakeholders, four separate focus groups were organized: one with students, one with business owner-managers and two with teachers. In spite of having separate focus groups, the purpose was to identify the different views that different programme stakeholders had of the same issues.

For more clarity, Figure 7.1 shows the process followed to collect data in order to evaluate the CDS programme.

Figure 7.1 Process followed in collecting data for the evaluation of CDS programme

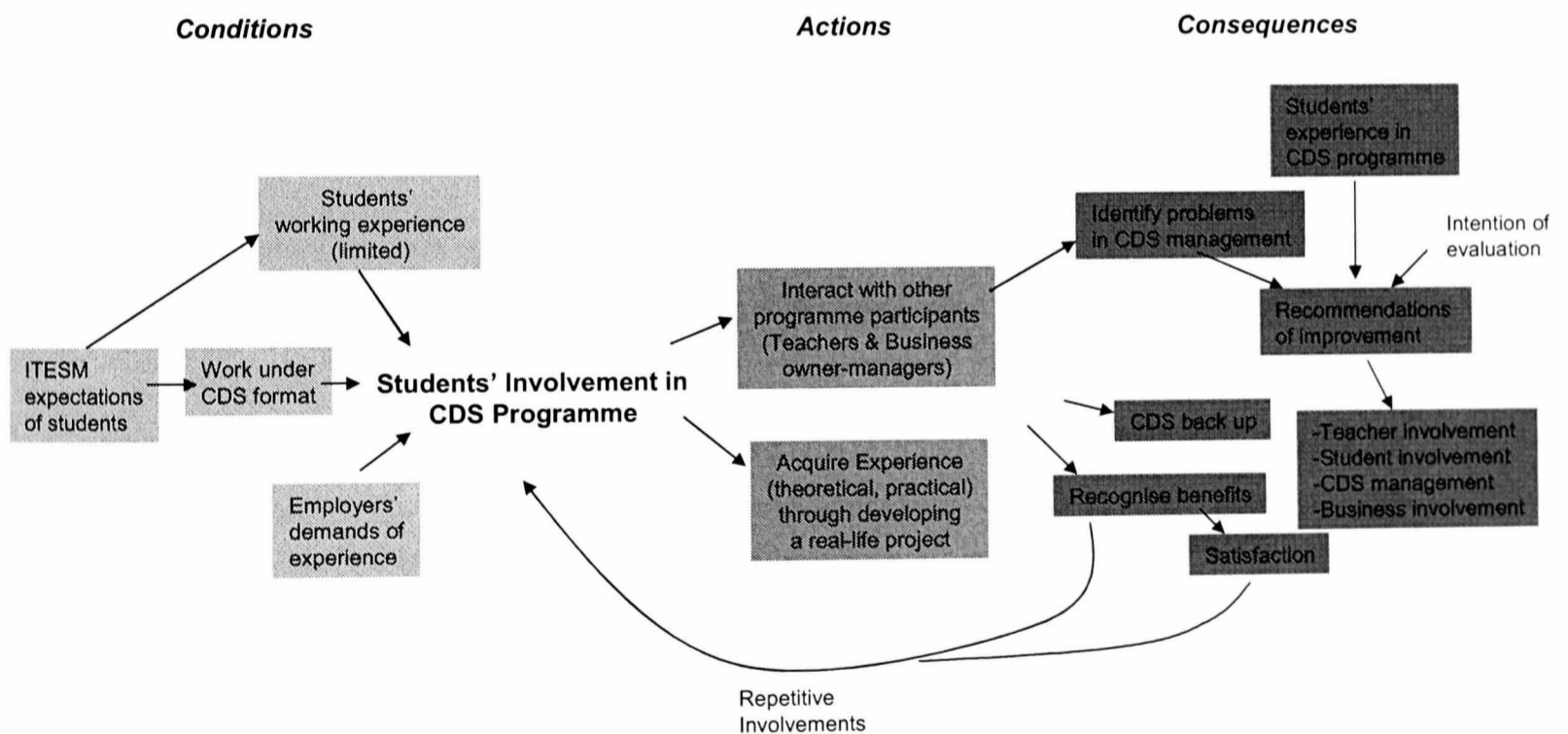


Students, owner-managers, teachers, and the manager of CDS programme were identified as stakeholders of the programme because they were the people directly involved in CDS programme. Therefore, one way to describe the CDS programme in detail is by describing how each of the stakeholders were involved in the CDS programme and the conditions, actions and consequences of their involvement. The following descriptions are based on the accounts each group of stakeholders gave in relation to their involvement.

7.2.1.1 Students' involvement in CDS programme

Figure 7.2 depicts the involvement of students in the CDS programme. The diagram shows the relationships (represented by the arrows) between the conditions, actions and consequences of students' involvement in the programme.

Figure 7.2 Diagram of students' involvement in CDS programme



Conditions

On the one hand, ITESM expected students to be fulltime students. On the other hand, students perceived that potential employers usually demanded previous and relevant working experience. Therefore, the CDS programme offered students the opportunity to develop real life projects as a way of compensating for their limited working experience.

Actions

Through the CDS programme, students interacted with teachers and business owner-managers. Students were motivated to participate in the CDS programme to acquire experience of real life problems and to put into practice the theory they had learnt. Students considered the development of a real life project as the application of the theory and a complement to it. They considered that their involvement in the CDS programme gave them the support of the university and the back up of the CDS programme.

Consequences

As consequence of their involvement in the CDS programme, students acknowledged they had gained the following benefits:

- A practical complement to the theory they learnt through lectures.
- An increased sense of confidence about their knowledge.
- The ability to analyse and solve real life problems.
- Interpersonal and communication abilities.

Students expressed that they were satisfied with being involved in the CDS programme. The benefits they expressed outweighed the problems, mainly related to the structure³⁴ of the programme, which they identified, such as: the teacher's commitment to their involvement, other students and owner-managers and problems with the management of CDS programme. Therefore, students sought to be involved in the CDS programme on several occasions.

Students were key stakeholders in the evaluation of CDS programme because they were affected, positively or negatively, by the programme. They were in a position to identify the programme's weaknesses and problems from a particular point of view. During the focus group interviews, students were asked to provide recommendations to improve the CDS programme. Students' recommendations were directed towards the problems with aspects of CDS structure they previously identified.

³⁴ Related to aspects of the functioning of the programme and interpersonal relations, their organization, coordination, and control.

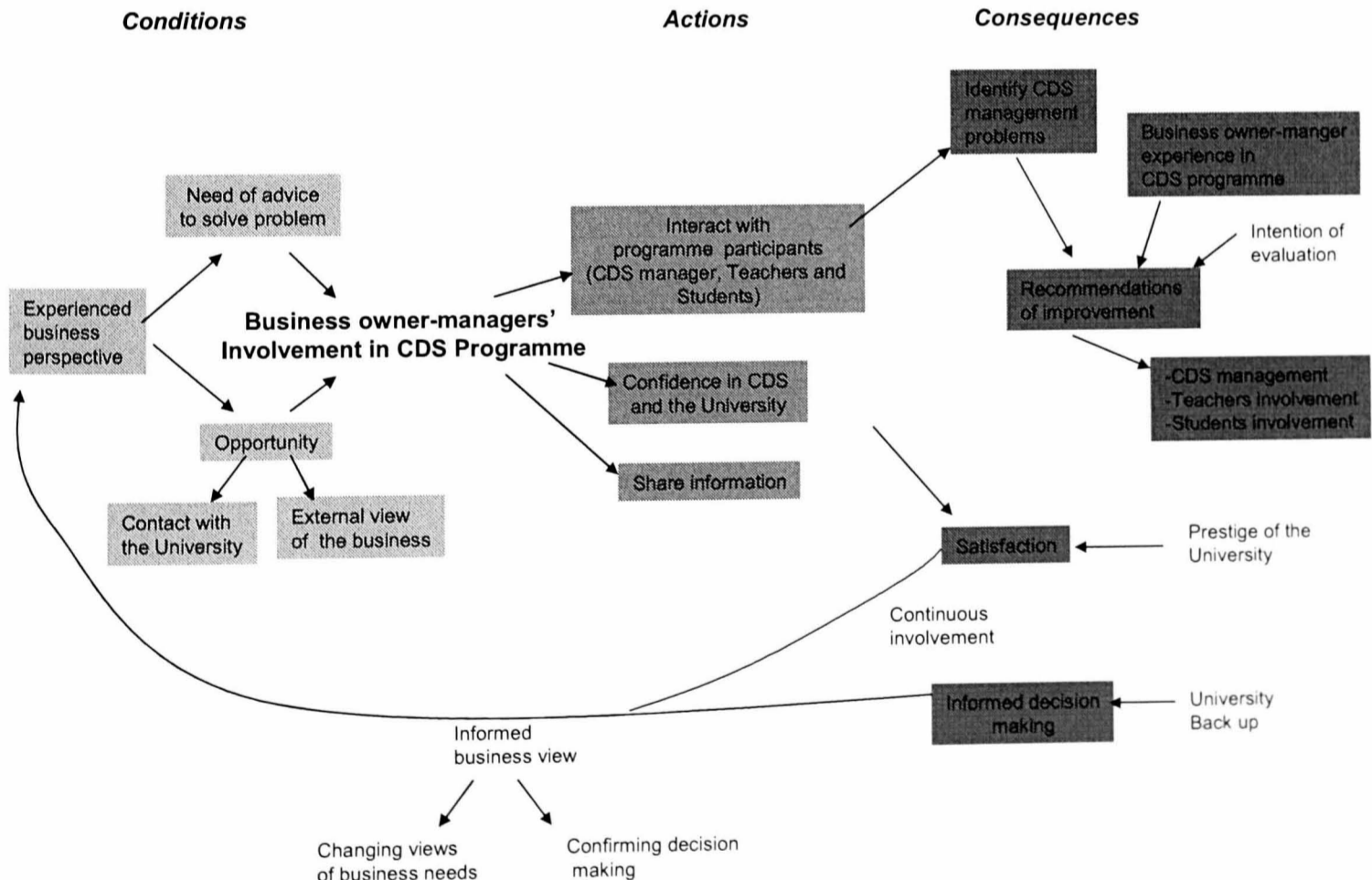
In general, students' involvement in the programme implied that:

- Part of the mark of the students in some courses depended on the project developed with CDS.
- Owner-managers presented a project or problem of the enterprise to students.
- Students, with the advice from the teacher, applied their knowledge to improve the problem.
- Students presented their proposal to improve the problem to the business owner-manager.

7.2.1.2 Business owner-managers' involvement in CDS programme

Figure 7.3 depicts business owner-managers' involvement in the CDS programme. This diagram shows the relationships (represented by the arrows) between the conditions, actions and consequences of owner-managers' involvement in the programme.

Figure 7.3 Diagram of business owner-managers' involvement in CDS programme



Conditions

The experience business owner-managers had in their business led them to identify specific needs or problems. Owner-managers expressed two reasons for becoming involved in the CDS programme. First, although they had practical experience, they had a need of technical advice in order to solve problems they had in their enterprises. Professional consultancies were too expensive; therefore, the CDS programme offered them an affordable way to have technical advice. Second, owner-managers expressed that they got involved in the CDS programme because they wanted to have an external view of their business, and they thought that links with the University could provide that view.

Actions

In their involvement in the CDS programme, business owner-managers interacted with the manager of the CDS to make initial arrangements for the project and interacted with teachers and students to provide business information needed for the project development. Business owner-managers expressed their confidence in the prestige of the University and gave access to the business information that was required.

Consequences

Business owner-managers expressed their satisfaction with cooperating in the achievement of academic objectives and with obtaining technical advice from a University. Their satisfaction made them seek a continuous involvement in the CDS programme. Also, by being involved in the CDS programme, business owner-managers considered that the University gave them a sense of confidence in making decisions. Business owner-managers expressed that they made more informed business decisions (by virtue of the project done with the support of the CDS programme). As a result of the project developed, owner-managers considered their view of the business to be more sophisticated, either because their view of what the business needed had changed or because their decision making process had been strengthened.

As a consequence of participating in the CDS programme, owner-managers identified problems related to the process³⁵ and the structure of the CDS programme, for example: stakeholders' lack of knowledge of programme procedures and problems with the involvement and commitment of teachers and students in the development of projects.

Business owner-managers' experiences in CDS programme, their identification of management problems in the CDS programme, in addition to the intention of the evaluation (oriented towards programme improvement) had a role to play in the intervention. Business owner-managers were encouraged to provide recommendations to improve the CDS programme. Their recommendations for improvement were related to process and structure aspects of the CDS programme.

Business owner-managers' involvement in the programme implied that:

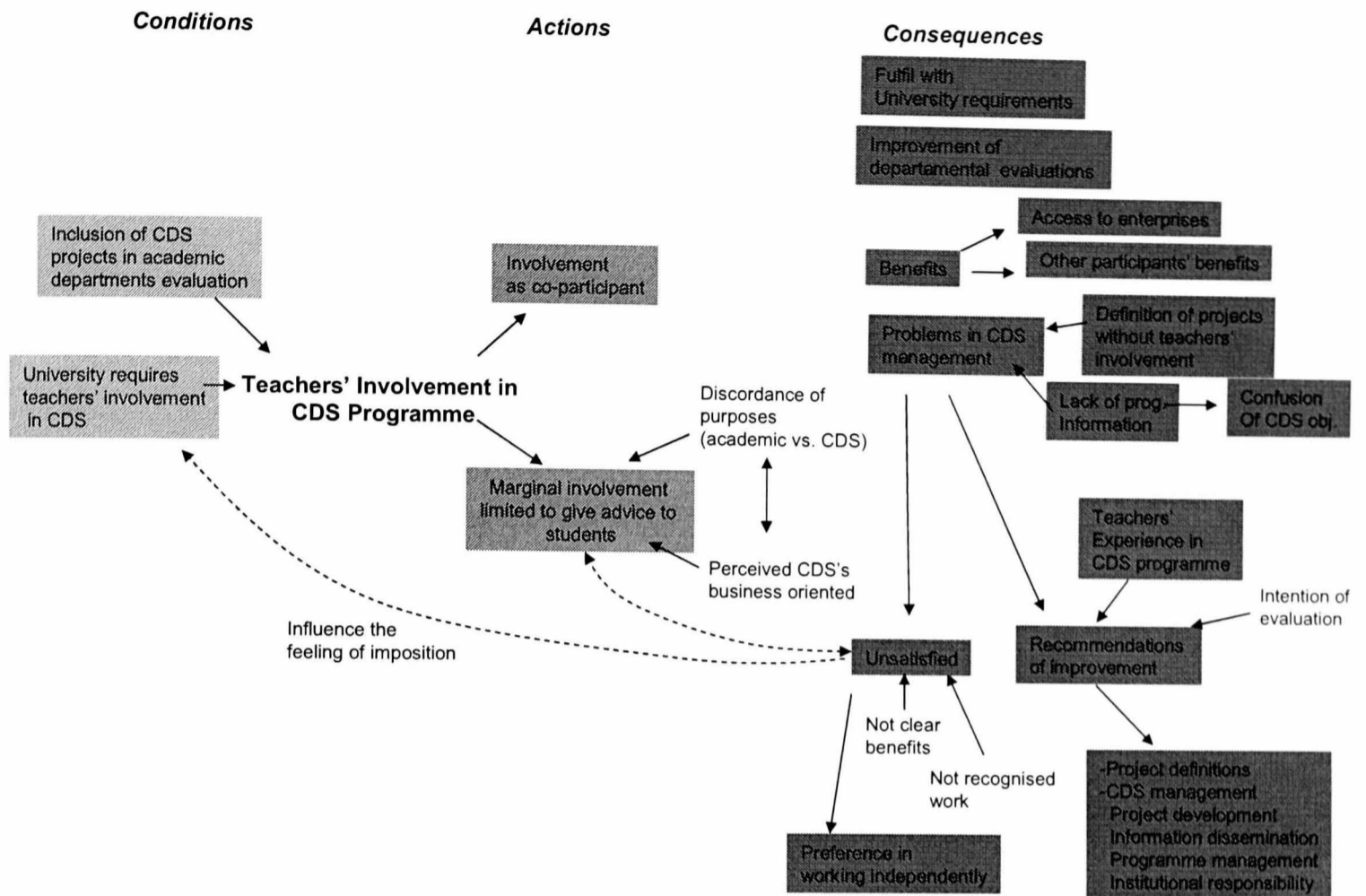
- Business owner-managers presented the business' problem to the CDS manager.
- Business owner-managers presented the business' problem to the group of students which would develop ways to improve the problem.
- Business owner-managers had meetings with students and provided information as required.
- Business owner-managers evaluated the students' proposals.

7.2.1.3 Teachers' involvement in CDS programme

Figure 7.4 depicts teachers' involvement in the CDS programme. This diagram shows the relationships (represented by the arrows) between the conditions, actions and consequences of teachers' involvement in the programme.

³⁵ Related to aspects of flows and control overflows within the programme.

Figure 7.4 Diagram of teachers' involvement in CDS programme



Conditions

As indicated previously, ITESM required teachers and students to develop projects through the CDS programme as part of some courses. This requirement led teachers to become involved in the CDS programme. In addition, teachers expressed they were involved in the CDS programme because the development of CDS projects was considered part of the evaluation of the academic department to which they belonged.

Actions

In their involvement in the CDS programme, it was identified that teachers were either fully committed or marginally committed to the projects developed. Teachers fully committed to and involved in the project regarded themselves as co-participants in the project and developed a close relationship with students and with the owner-managers. Teachers marginally committed to and involved in the project, considered that there was discordance between the purposes of academia and the purposes of the CDS. They perceived that the CDS was a business-oriented programme; therefore, they confined

their activities and relationship to providing advice to students about the project development.

Consequences

As a consequence of being involved in the development of CDS projects, teachers sought to fulfil the University requirements and to improve their departmental evaluations.

In the focus group discussions, teachers identified problems related to the process and the structure of the CDS programme, for example: the stakeholders' lack of information about the CDS programme objectives and procedures and the definition of projects without teachers' involvement.

In spite of the fact that teachers recognized the benefits of having contact with enterprises with real life problems, and recognized the benefits that other programme participants gained, some teachers said they were dissatisfied with being involved in the CDS programme. They said that they would prefer to work independently (develop projects outside CDS) because, for them, the benefits they received were not clear and they felt their work was not recognized. It was noted that a possible cause of dissatisfaction was that CDS projects were imposed on them.

Teachers that were fully involved in the development of CDS projects were more likely to feel satisfied with their involvement in the programme.

Teachers' experiences in the CDS programme, their identification of CDS management problems, in addition to the intention of the evaluation (oriented towards programme improvement) had a role to play in the intervention. Teachers were encouraged to provide recommendations to improve the CDS programme. These recommendations were related to the problems in the process and structure of the CDS programme that they had previously identified, for example, the need to provide stakeholders with information of the programme, to improve CDS management and to acknowledge the University's responsibility in the development of CDS projects.

In summary, teachers' involvement in the programme implied that:

- The teacher acknowledged a business problem presented by the owner-manager.
- The teacher gave advice to students in the development of the project.
- The teacher gave students a grade for the project developed.

7.2.2 Conceptual use: Learning about the programme being evaluated

The descriptions of the involvement of students, business owner-managers and teachers in the CDS programme helped to identify the stakeholders' particular CC&I in the programme.

The following sections present the CC&I that stakeholders had about the CDS programme; allowing better knowledge and understanding of the programme from the stakeholders' perspective.

7.2.2.1 Students' claims, concerns and issues

Students' particular claims

1. Students claimed that their involvement in the CDS programme helped them to complement the theory they had learnt.
2. Students claimed that through their involvement in the CDS programme they had acquired working experience.
3. Students claimed that their involvement in the CDS programme had allowed them to put into practice the theory they had learnt.
4. Students claimed that their involvement in the CDS programme had contributed to develop abilities such as team work and problem solving.
5. Students claimed that the CDS programme had provided them with structure and control in the development of projects.
6. Students claimed that CDS had become involved in the project by making the first contacts with the enterprise.

7. Students claimed that CDS had facilitated access to enterprises in order to develop projects.
8. Students claimed that owner-managers had confidence in them because the CDS programme was backing up the project.
9. Students claimed that, thanks to the CDS programme, their interest in learning had been aroused.
10. Students claimed that they had developed confidence in their knowledge and work capacity due to their involvement in the CDS programme.

Students' particular concerns

1. Students were concerned about the limited motivation they had received from teachers in the development of projects.
2. Students were concerned with the non-implementation of projects.
3. Students expressed their concern over the time owner-managers dedicated to the project.
4. Students were concerned about teachers not being involved in the analysis and approval of projects.
5. Students were concerned about the process of formalization of projects between CDS manager, owner-manager and teacher.
6. Students were concerned with the lack of budget they had to develop the project.
7. Students expressed their concern with the information about the CDS programme.
8. Students were concerned about the dissemination of the CDS programme.

Students' particular issues

1. Students had disagreements in relation to teachers' supervision and involvement.
2. Students had disagreements about owner-managers sharing information about their enterprises.
3. Students had disagreements about the development of projects in large enterprises.

7.2.2.2 Business owner-managers' claims, concerns and issues

Owner-managers' particular claims

1. Owner-managers claimed that CDS offered an affordable way to solve some problems of their enterprise.
2. Owner-managers claimed that CDS offered an external view of their enterprises.
3. Owner-managers claimed that CDS offered them links to the education system.
4. Owner-managers claimed that CDS allowed students to put theory into practice.
5. Owner-managers claimed that CDS offered them ratification of their business perspectives.
6. Owner-managers claimed that CDS backed up their decision-making processes.
7. Owner-managers claimed that CDS contributed to improvement of the business.
8. Owner-managers claimed that through CDS they were more informed about their business needs.
9. Owner-managers claimed that they shared information about their enterprise without any restriction.
10. Owner-managers claimed they had confidence in the students because ITESM was underwriting the project.
11. Owner-managers claimed that CDS was involved in the definition of projects.
12. Owner-managers claimed that good projects were the consequences of teachers' full involvement in their development.
13. Owner-managers claimed they sought continuous involvement in CDS due to the benefits they received.

Owner-managers' particular concerns

1. Owner-managers expressed their concerns about the coordination of the students' groups that were developing projects.
2. Owner-managers were concerned that students' course overload affected the performance of students in the project.
3. Owner-managers were concerned with projects not achieving what was expected.
4. Owner-managers expressed their concerns about projects being limited to one semester.

5. Owner-managers were concerned about not having a working schedule with students and teachers.
6. Owner-managers were concerned about the roles of each of the participants in the project.
7. Owner-managers expressed their concerns about the lack of information on project procedures and processes.
8. Owner-managers were concerned that the communication with the University was done through the students and not through the teachers.
9. Owner-managers were concerned with the advice teachers were giving students.
10. Owner-managers expressed their concerns with the lack of information they had about the programme.
11. Owner-managers expressed their concerns with the benefits of implementing each project (in terms of profits) and found it difficult to decide whether or not to implement a project.

Owner-managers' particular issues

1. Owner-managers had disagreements about the involvement of teachers in the definition of projects.

7.2.2.3 Teachers' claims, concerns and issues

Teachers' particular claims

1. Teachers claimed that CDS helped to improve evaluation indexes of undergraduate courses.
2. Teachers claimed that CDS contributed to the acquisition of teaching experience.
3. Teachers claimed that CDS was a good experience for students.
4. Teachers claimed that CDS helped them to make contacts with the private sector.
5. Teachers claimed that business-owner managers were satisfied with the projects developed.
6. Teachers claimed that CDS gave formality to the procedures needed to develop a project.

Teachers' particular concerns

1. Teachers were concerned that in the negotiation of projects, the required information was not specified.
2. Teachers were concerned that project agreements were carried out without their involvement.
3. Teachers expressed their concerns about CDS's interest in enterprise development as opposed to academic development.
4. Teachers were concerned with subsidising the projects for large enterprises.
5. Teachers were concerned with the contribution of CDS projects to academic objectives.
6. Teachers expressed their concerns about the objectives of the CDS programme.
7. Teachers were concerned about the time they had to reflect on their participation.
8. Teachers were concerned about CDS's imposition of procedures and methods.
9. Teachers expressed their concerns about the communication between CDS and academia.

Teachers' particular issues

1. Teachers had disagreements about the access students had to information on the enterprise.
2. Teachers had disagreements over their preferences in working with CDS.
3. Teachers had disagreements over the purposes of projects, either to diagnose or to implement them.
4. Teachers had disagreements about who provided the service (who had developed the project).
5. Teachers had disagreements about the benefits they had received from CDS involvement.
6. Teachers had disagreements about the involvement of CDS in the development of projects.
7. Teachers had disagreements about the information CDS stakeholders had about the programme.
8. Teachers had disagreements over who was part of CDS and who was not.

7.2.2.4 Outcomes of the conceptual use of the evaluation

In specific, the value of the conceptual use promoted through the SRPPE approach could be identified by answering the following question: What was learnt about the CDS programme? And from whom?

In this sense, positive aspects of the programme were learnt from students, owner-managers and teachers such as that for students the CDS programme represented a source of experience and practice and a way to complement the theory learnt. For owner-managers it represented an affordable way to solve problems of the enterprise and to develop links with the University. From teachers, it was learnt that they saw the benefits offered by programme as being more directed towards students and owner-managers. The positive aspects of the programme identified through the claims of the stakeholders represented the activities the programme should continue to support. However, from the view of the stakeholders things needed to be improved in the programme. In this sense, the concerns and the issues helped to unveil the diversity of interests within the programme that need to be considered in seeking the improvement of CDS programme.

From students, owner-managers, and teachers was learnt that their concerns and issues were related to aspects of the processes followed within the programme and the structure of the programme. However, their divergent interests influenced these concerns and issues. In order to understand the different interests within the politics of CDS programme, Morgan's (1986) political metaphor of an organization is of use. He suggested that interests can be understood in relation to three interconnected domains: task interests, career interests and extramural interests. In this sense, *task interests* are "connected with the work one has to perform"; *career interests* are related to the person's "workplace aspirations and visions as to what their future may hold" and *extramural interests* related to "personalities, private attitudes, values, preferences, and beliefs... (which) shape the way (people) act in relation to both job and career (interests)" (p. 150). Morgan's depiction aided understanding of the programme and its stakeholders by identifying a possible source of tension between them because of their

different interests. In this sense, students' CC&I emphasised their *career interests* as they perceived the CDS programme as a source of work experience. Owner-managers' CC&I emphasised their *task interests* as they saw the CDS programme as a way of solving enterprise problems with the support of the University (not only students but also teachers' experience). Teachers' CC&I also stressed their task interests but with the view that the task of the CDS was to support academic purposes.

Additionally, as part of the conceptual use of evaluation, it was considered that the SRPPE approach promoted individual learning through the involvement of stakeholders in the focus group session; it is considered that this involvement supported group learning in the process of sharing information and it also supported stakeholders' questioning the values and beliefs of the programme (double loop learning). For example, the teachers' shared their experiences in the focus group and exchanged the practices they carried out in the project development. This knowledge-sharing experience is implied in the following comment from a teacher:³⁶

Teacher 2 “As a teacher I had not thought about it previously (the importance of project implementation), but I think is a very important topic to consider” (Second teachers' focus group, unit 251).

Later, when teachers discussed who had provided the service and who was part of CDS and who was not, Teacher 2 commented:

Teacher 2 “I would like to say that I work for CDS... However, it is not a vision I had before this meeting” (Second teachers' focus group, units 395, 396).

Having identified a problem of communication and information of the programme, the focus group sessions also served as way of sharing the fragmented information that each of the teachers had.

It was also felt that the development of this case study fulfilled learning purposes. It helped by documenting the evaluation process and by providing an opportunity to

³⁶ The discussions all took place in Spanish and the quotations presented in the two case studies are the researcher's translation into English.

reflect about it. The case study identified and presented the particular CC&I of the programme stakeholders that helped to understand the programme better from the point of view of the stakeholders.

7.2.3 Symbolic use: Identifying the political stances of the CDS programme

As indicated in section 7.1, the symbolic use of evaluation refers to the possibility of understanding and dealing with the political stances of the programme and with the persuasive areas of evaluation. This section identifies and presents the general issues of CDS. These general issues emerged from comparing the claims, concerns and issues of CDS stakeholders (presented in the last section). The general issues of CDS represented topics that enclose declarations of disagreement of opinions between students, owner-managers, and teachers. Table 7.1 presents six general issues of the CDS programme within which the case study concentrates.

Table 7.1 General Issues of CDS Programme

-
1. Information about CDS programme
 2. Teachers' supervision and involvement
 3. CDS involvement in project development
 4. Implementation of projects
 5. Business owner-managers sharing of information
 6. Development of projects in large enterprises

The researcher decided to concentrate the analysis of the case study on these general issues because they helped to present and understand the different views and interests stakeholders had about the programme. The general issues of CDS programme were considered a means to examine the conditions and the complexity of the issues raised in the evaluation. In addition, the general issues were considered examples of the needs the CDS programme had to deal with, and the political stances that were perceived.

The following sections present the different opinions that programme stakeholders had in relation to the six identified general issues of the CDS programme.

7.2.3.1 General Issue 1: Information about the CDS programme

The general issue of information about the CDS programme is related to the knowledge programme stakeholders had about the objectives and procedures of CDS. It reflects the disagreement of opinions among students, owner-managers and teachers regarding the information of the CDS programme.

For example, students had little information about the existence of the CDS programme and its objectives. For them, this issue represented a particular concern (see section 7.2.2.1, concern 7); they expressed:

Student 7 “We only knew about the programme when the teacher introduced the project in the course. We did not know what CDS was until we had a course where a CDS project was to be developed” (Students’ focus group, unit 111-113).

As this quotation indicates, students’ involvement on the programme was a consequence of the University requirement which imposed the development of projects with CDS on some courses. Information about the CDS was not communicated to students before their engagement in the course. This particular concern was not only related to knowing that the programme existed but to knowing about CDS procedures, processes and the role of each of the participants involved in the programme.

In the same way, for business owner-managers, the information about the CDS programme presented particular concerns (see section 7.2.2.2, concerns 6, 7 and 10). These particular concerns were identified as a *CDS management problem*.³⁷ In this respect, a business owner-manager noted that:

Owner-manager 2 “I think this is something that should be dealt with at the beginning of the project in some kind of agreement. This agreement should make it clear, for the different participants, how the CDS programme works. Sometimes the businessman’s role or the student’s role is not clear ... Then it seems that students obtain a mark from the project, I do not really know how it works ..., but there were students from the team that worked on the project who did not work as

³⁷ Defined in the analysis as, ‘the difficulties or complains owner-managers had or identified from the management of CDS programme’.

expected. These students did not influence the project, but did affect its outcomes and affected the mark of the team” (Owner-managers’ focus group, unit 47-48).

For some teachers, the general issue of information about the CDS programme was more complex. It was related not only to their particular concern of CDS objectives (see section 7.2.2.3, concern 6), but to their particular issue of basic programme information such as how the CDS programme was defined and who provided the service (see section 7.2.2.3, issues 4 and 8).

Teachers’ concerns about CDS objectives were characterized by a view of *discordance of objectives*³⁸ between CDS and the academia. They viewed CDS as *business-oriented*³⁹ and interested in fulfilling indices of number of CDS projects developed with little interest in the academic side of the projects. These views are implied in the following discussion between teachers:

- Teacher 1* “... I do not like to work on CDS because its objectives are not academic.
- Teacher 2* What happens is that CDS put the business in touch with the teacher or the students and, in general, it is not worried about the project, or about the project progress.
- Teacher 3* CDS identifies as its principal client the owner-manager ... and I do not like that at all, because I consider that the principal clients are the students.
- Teacher 1* On the other hand, CDS monitors the project because they are interested in the owner-manager, rather than an academic interest” (First teachers’ focus group, unit 188-191).
- Teacher 3* ... I see CDS as an area that seeks to have the maximum number of possible projects with enterprises. How good are the projects? Are they good enough or not? I do not know ... but there are many enterprises that help to fulfil CDS index of performance” (First teachers’ focus group, unit 228).

Within this general issue of CDS programme information, teachers had disagreements and debates about who provided and who developed the projects, and the nature of the CDS, as the following conversation indicates:

³⁸ Defined in the analysis as, ‘teachers’ perceived disagreements between academic purposes and CDS purposes, which made them to be marginally involved in the development of projects’.

³⁹ Defined in the analysis as, ‘teachers’ view that CDS was focused on business rather than being focused on academic objectives’.

- Teacher 1* “I think the communication between the enterprise and ITESM is not clear, because it is ITESM who develops the projects, not the students by themselves.
- Teacher 2* In a certain way, teachers are the ones that guide the development of each project.
- Teacher 1* Exactly, projects are guided by the teacher who works in ITESM. Students do not work alone” (Second teachers’ focus group, unit 133-136).
- Teacher 2* “What CDS is offering is a consultancy but developed by students” (Second teachers’ focus group, unit 147).
- Teacher 2* “As I understand, projects are developed by the students in coordination with the teacher. That is what I would call a CDS project... other very important parts are the links, the coordination, that CDS makes.
- Teacher 1* But ... in general, I think that all of us should be part of CDS” (Second teachers’ focus group, unit 385-387).

Before moving on to the second of the six general issues of CDS, it must be noted that the general issue of information of CDS reflected concerns about aspects of the processes followed within the programme and the structure of the programme. In general, students were particularly concerned about the publicity and promotion of the CDS programme and the projects; as well as the processes and procedures involved in developing a project. Similarly, owner-managers had particular concerns about the information on the process and procedures involved in developing a CDS projects. Teachers had particular concerns about the objectives of the programme, especially its academic orientation, and had disagreements as to who provided and who developed the projects. These different views reflected the confusions and needs of programme stakeholders. As part of the approach used to evaluate the CDS programme, stakeholders were encouraged to provide recommendations that would improve the programme. These recommendations are explored in a later section of the case study.

7.2.3.2 General Issue 2: Teachers’ supervision and involvement against non-supervision and non-involvement of teachers

For the students, teachers’ supervision and involvement was an issue because some students expressed that they had the support and guidance of teachers throughout the

project, while others expressed that teachers were only “observers of the project” (see section 7.2.2.1, issue 1). This could be linked to *teachers’ full involvement*⁴⁰ and to *teachers’ marginal involvement*.⁴¹ Students argued that teachers should be involved from the early stages of project (see section 7.2.2.1, concern 4), for example:

Student 5 “CDS and teachers should analyse each project together, and plan the project (the project formalization process), before the semester starts in order to optimize time. In that way, we would be able to finish the projects” (Students’ focus group, unit 81).

Similarly, owner-managers identified the general issue of teachers’ supervision and involvement as their only particular issue (see section 7.2.2.2, issue 1). For them, teachers’ involvement represented a way of developing a working relationship with ITESM; however, the working relationship and communication was through students, and teachers were seen as distant from the project and the enterprise. Additionally, they considered that good projects were those in which the teacher was fully involved, giving students advice throughout the project, and having direct communication with the owner-manager.

For the teachers, their involvement was a concern (see section 7.2.2.3, concern 2). They believed that CDS defined projects with owner-managers only, without consulting them. It seemed that this lack of consultation triggered situations which teachers saw as poor CDS management. One of the consequences was that teachers were not satisfied with CDS projects and did not want to be involved with the CDS programme. In this sense, the definition of projects without consulting teachers reinforced their idea that CDS was business-oriented, rather than academic-oriented. It also reinforced the view that there was discordance between CDS purposes and academic purposes, involving teachers only marginally in the development of projects. Teachers felt that their work was not being recognized and they had difficulties identifying the benefits they received from the programme, causing them to prefer to develop projects independently and not with CDS; which sharpened the idea that the programme had been imposed on them.

⁴⁰ Defined in the analysis as, ‘teachers’ involvement, as co-participants, in the development of CDS projects’.

⁴¹ Defined in the analysis as, ‘teachers’ practical involvement in the development of CDS projects by limiting their relations and activities to give advice to students’.

To summarise, the general issue of teachers' supervision and involvement reflected concerns in relation to the programme's structure. In this sense, some students argued that teachers were involved in the development of projects while other students argued that teachers were not fully involved and that they had received limited supervision. Similarly, owner-managers had disagreements about the involvement of teachers and supervision in the project. Owner-managers noted that good projects were those where teachers were fully involved in the project and had frequent contact with them. Owner-managers were particularly concerned of the distant relationship teachers had with them in the development of projects. Teachers expressed their particular concern about project agreements carried out between CDS and owner-managers without the involvement of teachers. This view of lack of involvement and consultation that teachers had was considered to be a symptom of the poor management which teachers saw in the CDS programme. These different views of programme stakeholders showed the complexity of the perception of teachers' supervision and involvement.

7.2.3.3 General Issue 3: Involvement against non-involvement of CDS in the development of projects

The third of the six general issues of the CDS, which refers to the symbolic use of evaluation, presents the different stakeholders' perspectives in relation to the involvement of CDS in the development of the projects. Students and owner-managers had a favourable view of CDS involvement in the development of the projects (referring to CDS manager). This involvement consisted in CDS making the initial contact with the enterprise, in defining the project with the owner-manager, and in defining a schedule to report project improvements (see section 7.2.2.1, claims 5 and 6 and section 7.2.2.2, claim 11). Teachers also noted favourably the involvement of the CDS in the development of projects because the CDS formalised an agreement between owner-managers and students, especially because students gained access to enterprises to develop real life projects (see section 7.2.2.3, claim 6).

However, CDS involvement also represented a particular issue because teachers questioned how much CDS had been actually involved in the development of the projects (see section 7.2.2.3, issue 6). Teachers recognized that CDS involvement was

limited to making the initial contact and to establishing a link with enterprises. Teachers argued that, in reality, teachers and students were the ones who developed the projects. As a teacher pointed out:

Teacher 2 “The problem is that CDS does not give or add any value during the development of the project. Within a marketing perspective, I would ask: Would I pay for CDS intervention in the project?” (First teachers’ focus group, unit 239)

Teachers’ view of the involvement of CDS in the development of projects was influenced by the following factors:

- Teachers’ view of discordance between CDS objectives and academic objectives.
- Teachers’ view of CDS being business-oriented instead of academic-oriented.

The different views of students, owner-managers and teachers in relation to the general issue of CDS involvement in the development of projects reflected aspects of the structure and politics⁴² of the programme. These different views represent an example of the complex involvement of CDS stakeholders in the development of projects. While students and owner-managers saw as favourable the involvement of CDS in the early stages (the definition and negotiation) of the project, teachers questioned the value of CDS, not in the initial stages of the project but in the development of projects. The discussion of this general issue raised awareness in CDS managers of the expectations different stakeholders had about CDS involvement.

7.2.3.4 General Issue 4: Implemented projects against non-implemented projects

During the focus group students identified the non-implementation of projects as a particular concern (see section 7.2.2.1, concern 2). This concern was because students were willing to be involved in the CDS programme in order to gain the experience normally demanded by employers. However, students noted that projects were

⁴² Related to the potency of stakeholders to influence events.

frequently proposals that were not implemented. They argued that they wanted to gain practical experience by implementing those proposals.

Similarly, the implementation of projects was identified as a particular concern by business owner-managers (see section 7.2.2.2, concern 11). Owner-managers wanted to know more clearly the benefits of implementing a particular project. Frequently, projects remained as proposals, as noted by an owner-manager:

Owner-manager 2 “I think that not implementing projects is a weakness of the CDS programme. Projects should be linked directly to business profit. Let’s say, an improvement was made, but it affected really this much. I mean, the project was put into practice but how was the enterprise affected? How much were my costs reduced? By what percentage did sales increase?” (Owner-managers’ focus group, unit 164)

In relation to this general issue of implementation of projects, teachers had a different view (see section 7.2.2.3, issue 3). Some of them acknowledged that it would be interesting to implement the projects. However, they considered that the implementation of projects was beyond the academic purposes because it depended on the enterprise, its resources, its personnel, and time. As a teacher said:

Teacher 3 “At the end of the day, students are not part of the enterprise where projects are to be implemented” (First teachers’ focus group, unit 263).

While, in general, teachers shared this view, they also recognized the importance of the implementation of projects, especially if the CDS intended to have an impact on the development of business. They argued that:

Teacher 2 “...the implementation of projects is what really promotes (business development) and it is not clear to me that we are doing that” (Second, teachers’ focus group, unit 250).

Teachers recommended following up the projects, which the researcher understood as an attempt to balance the situation. While considering that the project implementation was out of their control, they recognized its importance and therefore suggested having a follow-up of projects in order to find out whether or not they had been implemented.

and if not, why not. Teachers also recognized that most of the projects represented proposals and that some of them involved some implementation.

Before moving on to the fifth of the six general issues over CDS, which refers to the symbolic use of the evaluation, it must be noted that the different views of students, owner-managers and teachers in relation to the implementation of projects reflected their different interests, as described in the conceptual use of the evaluation (see section 7.2.2.4). In summary, while for students and owner-managers this general issue represented a concern, for students it referred to their interest in acquiring practical experience and in acquiring working experience demanded by employers, whereas for owner-managers it referred to their interest in knowing the impact that the project could have on the enterprise. For teachers, the implementation of projects represented a particular issue. They recognized that the implementation of projects reflected the impact CDS had on the development of projects; however, they also noted that the implementation of projects was beyond academic objectives. The complexity of the general issue of implementation of projects reflected the different interests of the stakeholders, thus unveiling these different interests as a source of tension between them.

7.2.3.5 General Issue 5: Business owner-managers sharing or not sharing information

Students had favourable and unfavourable assertions about owner-managers sharing information (see section 7.2.2.1, issue 2). While some students did not experience problems in accessing business information, others had difficulties in obtaining the information they required to develop their project. This general issue was confirmed in the teachers' focus group (see section 7.2.2.3, issue 1). In contrast, business owner-managers claimed that in their particular projects, they provided the necessary and requested information (see section 7.2.2.2, claim 9).

The intention of the approach used to evaluate the CDS programme was to identify the different views that different programme stakeholders had. It was not the intention to confront them directly, because participants experienced the issue of information-

sharing in different ways. The focus of the evaluation approach was on the lessons that can be gained from those different views and experiences and from the process of sharing stakeholders' experiences.

Students noted that it was important that business owner-managers were fully interested in the projects because if this were the case, they would give the necessary time and information to developing the project. Teachers also made this recommendation, and in the focus group they shared the practices they carried out in order to face this and other problems. For example:

- “To arrange an initial visit to the enterprise and an initial meeting between students, teacher and business owner-managers and other people from the business involved in the project. The purpose of this first meeting was to give formality to the project, to become close to the enterprise and to present the project and identify the project information requirements” (Teacher 4, second teachers' focus group, unit 141).
- Adding, to the contract made between CDS and the enterprise, a schedule of monthly feedback meetings between students, teacher, and the owner-managers. Frequent meetings could keep the owner-managers informed about the progress of the project; allow necessary adjustments to be made to the project and ensure that the necessary information has been given (Teacher 2, second teachers' focus group, units 151-152).

The business owner-managers focus group made a similar recommendation:

Owner-manager 3 “I would say that a working schedule between students, teachers and the business owner-manager should be arranged. In this way, we fix a day and time to clarify doubts and suggestions that the students make” (Owner-managers' focus group, unit 49).

In general, the different views of students, owner-managers and teachers in relation to owner-managers sharing information for the development projects reflected difficulties in the process aspect of the CDS programme. On the one hand, students and teachers had disagreements about owner-managers sharing information, in some cases they faced

difficulties in accessing key information, while in others there were no difficulties. On the other hand, owner-managers claimed that they provided the information requested. The different views that stakeholders had reflected the complexity of the general issue of business owner-managers' sharing of information; in specific, it reflected conflicts experienced in the process of requesting and providing information and the flow and control over the flow of information of the enterprise.

7.2.3.6 General Issue 6: Development of projects in large enterprises

The last general issue of the CDS programme, which refers to the symbolic use of the evaluation, is related to the development of projects in large enterprises. The researcher understood at the beginning of the fieldwork that the CDS programme was directed at providing support to small firms. However, during initial interviews with the CDS manager and teachers, the development of projects with large enterprises emerged as one of the general issues of the evaluation.

Students' main interest in being involved in CDS programme was to gain work experience. They considered that the CDS programme was a means through which they could gain access to large enterprises and to the work experience they wanted. Students wanted the certificate that CDS give them at the end of the project to describe, in detail, the nature of the project and in which enterprise it had been developed.

For some students, developing projects in large enterprises was a source of motivation and of learning beyond academic purposes. In contrast, for other students, working in large enterprises constrained the development of a project due to bureaucracy (see section 7.2.2.1, issue 3). They considered that projects developed in small businesses offered them more opportunities to make relevant suggestions.

For teachers, developing projects in large enterprises was a major source of concern (see section 7.2.2.3, concern 4). The researcher considered this to be related to structural aspects of the CDS programme, such as teachers' views of CDS business orientation and to their view of discrepancies between the programme and the academic objectives.

This was seen as affecting teachers' involvement in the development of projects, as noted in the following conversation:

- Teacher 1* "I think that the CDS programme is not very academic, it is more oriented, I do not want to say to "sales", because in reality CDS income is small; but CDS is more oriented to attending to the businessmen instead of the student" (First teachers' focus group, unit 128).
- Teacher 4* "Another thing that I do not like, now that (Teacher 1) mentions it, is related to large enterprises. I thought that CDS had a social development orientation. Large enterprises have enough money to pay for a secretary and for consultancy projects. Given that neither my students nor I receive any payment for the project, I think we are more willing to help small enterprises than large enterprises. I do not think it is appropriate that students or I should work for free for an enterprise that has enough money to pay for this project and twenty more" (First teachers' focus group, unit 133-134).
- Teacher 2* "I want to support that idea ... maybe CDS was created for small businesses... but when we are talking about large enterprises, I think that the negotiation of the project should be different. The community should be benefited from CDS. If students do not receive economic benefits, at least other people in this community should be benefited" (First teachers' focus group, unit 136-137).

In addition, teachers' concern about developing projects in large enterprises is considered to be related to their doubts about the benefits they received from the programme; to teachers' view of their work not being recognized and to teachers' feeling of dissatisfaction with their involvement. Therefore, the preference teachers had for working independently of CDS was a reaction to the feeling of projects being imposed.

In summary, the different views of students and teachers in relation to the development of projects in large enterprises again reflected their different interests (students' career interests and teachers' task interests) and reflected problems with aspects of the CDS programme's structure. The owner-managers involved in the evaluation told of the experiences their MSMEs had with CDS programme and they did not make any reference to the development of projects in large enterprises.

Students had disagreements about the development of projects in large enterprises. For some students, the development of projects offered them access to large enterprises and

the work experience they needed. In contrast, some students argued that large enterprises limited the projects because of bureaucratic procedures, while small firms offered more opportunities for the development of projects. The different interests of students and teachers reflected the complexity of the general issue of the development of projects in large enterprises. In addition, the presentation of this general issue allowed the identification of aspects of the structure of the programme, which influenced teachers' views in relation to the development of projects in large enterprises.

7.2.3.7 Outcomes of the symbolic use of evaluation

Morgan's (1986) political metaphor of organizations is again useful to identify the outcomes of the symbolic use of evaluation, especially because it accepts the inevitability of organizational politics and recognizes the different interests of individuals.

The general issues of CDS (discussed above) helped to identify aspects of the programme that triggered disagreements between stakeholders; these aspects referred to CDS's processes, to its structure, to the politics of the programme and to the interests of the different stakeholders.

The development of the general issues of CDS also helped to unveil conflicts because of political dynamics within the programme. For example, there seemed to be a conflict between teachers and the manager of the programme, because teachers' formal authority seemed reduced by their marginal involvement in the initial stages of definition of projects. This conflict was stressed because the control of the structure of the programme and its information was in the hands of the programme manager; while the knowledge and control over the development of the specific projects were in the hands of the teachers. The development of the general issues of CDS and the identification of conflicts unveiled relationships of dependency that the researcher inferred extended between the stakeholders such as:

- Students wanted practical work experience, and one way in which they could gain the experience they needed was through the development of CDS projects; therefore, students depended on the links of CDS with enterprises, they

depended on the advice and involvement of teachers and depended on the information provided by the business owner-manager.

- Owner-managers wanted to solve problems in their enterprises, and one way in which they did so was through the CDS programme; therefore, owner-managers depended on the relationship developed with the CDS manager, they depended on the teacher in charge of the students that developed the project and they depended on the work of the group of students.
- Teachers were required by the University to be involved in the CDS programme and departmental evaluations took account of this involvement; therefore, teachers depended on having projects to develop with CDS programme, in the same way that they depended on having students with whom to develop a project and having an enterprise that required a project.
- CDS' existence was inherently dependent on the involvement of students, owner-managers, and teachers.

The general issues discussed above helped to identify the different views programme stakeholders had; in this sense, they helped the CDS manager to examine the conditions that surround each general issue; they helped the understanding of the complexity of each issue, and to legitimate, as an instrument of persuasion, the changes that the programme needed. In this respect, the CDS manager recognized the possibility of using the evaluation in a symbolic way as follows:

CDS manager “For me this evaluation is very relevant. In fact, these conclusions that have been generated after the focus groups are very valuable in order to suggests ways to improve the programme” (Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, unit 60).

Later in the interview, the programme manager added:

CDS manager “An objective I have, or a need I have, is to show my superiors what was done with the evaluation. Not through the perspective of CDS, but through students, teachers and business owner-managers perspective. To show them, this is what they are asking us, this is what they see, this is what they need, what they want... And this is what I need if we want the programme to grow, and if we want it to have an impact” (Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, units 79-81).

The importance of the identification of the general issues of CDS with the symbolic use of the evaluation was that they sought to achieve a better understanding of the programme through:

- deepening understanding of the different stakeholders' interests;
- identifying the aspects of the programme that triggered disagreements between stakeholders; and
- acknowledging conflicts within the programme due to political dynamics and dependencies.

The discussion of the general issues of the CDS programme allowed understanding of the different interests of stakeholders. By understanding these different interests, stakeholders could be persuaded to seek ways of having a better programme.

7.2.4 Instrumental use: supporting decision-making

One of the aims of the research project was to find out ways of improving the CDS programme. Stakeholders of the CDS programme were encouraged to provide practical recommendations in order to solve the problems they had identified. In this sense, the objective was not only to identify what was wrong, in their view, but how it could be improved.

Taking into account the six general issues of the CDS programme identified and analysed in the last section, the following subsections give the broad recommendations made by students, business owner-managers and teachers during the different focus group sessions of the evaluation. These recommendations are considered as support for decision-making and action-taking, in other words in support of the instrumental use of evaluation.

As a guide to the reader, Table 7.2 relates the sections in which the general issues of CDS were previously discussed, in the symbolic use of evaluation, to the sections in which the summaries of CDS stakeholders' recommendations are presented.

Table 7.2 Relationship between symbolic use and instrumental use in CDS evaluation

| Symbolic use of evaluation | | Instrumental use of evaluation | |
|---|----------------|--|----------------|
| <i>General issue</i> | <i>Section</i> | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>Section</i> |
| Information about the CDS programme | 7.2.3.1 | Recommendations related to the general issue of information about CDS programme | 7.2.4.1 |
| Teachers' supervision and involvement against non-supervision and non-involvement of teachers | 7.2.3.2 | Recommendations related to the general issue of teachers' supervision and involvement | 7.2.4.2 |
| Involvement against non-involvement of CDS in the development of projects | 7.2.3.3 | Recommendations related to the general issue of CDS involvement in project development | 7.2.4.3 |
| Implemented projects against non-implemented projects | 7.2.3.4 | Recommendations related to the general issue of implementation of projects | 7.2.4.4 |
| Business owner-managers sharing or not sharing information | 7.2.3.5 | Recommendations related to the general issue of business owner-managers information sharing | 7.2.4.5 |
| Development of projects in large enterprises | 7.2.3.6 | Recommendations related to the general issue of development of projects in large enterprises | 7.2.4.6 |

7.2.4.1 Recommendations related to the general issue of information about CDS programme

The recommendations that students, owner-managers and teachers made in relation to the general issue of CDS programme information were related to:

- the publicity of CDS programme;
- the dissemination of the projects;
- the follow up of projects;
- the clarification of the roles and benefits of each participant of CDS;
- the clarification of the different programmes of CDS; and
- the creation of a database of enterprises interested in projects.

Appendix 9 presents a detailed list of the recommendations made by the different stakeholders on the issue of CDS programme information.

7.2.4.2 Recommendations related to the general issue of teachers' supervision and involvement

The general recommendations that students, owner-managers and teachers made in relation to the general issue of teachers' supervision and involvement were that:

- Teachers should show their commitment to the project by visiting personally the enterprise where a project is developed, by clarifying more frequently students' doubts, and giving some consultancy in areas not covered by the course.
- Teachers should get involved directly in the definition of each project, clarifying its aim, purposes and achievements; and in the development of a work schedule.
- Teachers should organize a committee to evaluate the feasibility of each potential project and its possible contribution to the academic objectives.
- CDS should present more clear information to the teachers about each possible project.
- CDS should monitor the real interest of each teacher in participating in CDS projects.
- Teachers should share their experiences with other teachers about the projects they developed.

Appendix 10 presents a detailed list of the recommendations made by the different stakeholders on the issue of teachers' supervision and involvement.

7.2.4.3 Recommendations related to the general issue of CDS involvement in project development

The broad recommendations that students, owner-managers and teachers made in relation to the general issue of CDS involvement in the development of projects were:

- CDS should provide students with materials and expenses to develop each project.
- CDS should make a diagnosis of each participant MSME and develop integral proposals for projects covering several topics.
- CDS should amplify the scope of its contract with MSMEs and clarify its terms and conditions.
- CDS should work more closely with the students, teachers and academic departments before, during and after each project and should improve feedback loops.
- CDS should have more personnel to develop more links with enterprises and projects.

- CDS should provide students with a certificate that details the experience they have gained in the development of each particular project.

Appendix 11 presents a detailed list of the recommendations made by the different stakeholders on the issue of CDS involvement in project development.

7.2.4.4 Recommendations related to the general issue of implementation of projects

The recommendations of students, owner-managers and teachers related to the general issue of the implementation of projects are as follows:

- CDS should follow up more closely whether projects were implemented.
- Teachers and students should make clear the economic impact of each project.
- CDS should encourage the implementation of projects.

Appendix 12 presents a detailed list of the recommendations made by the different stakeholders on the issue of implementation of projects.

7.2.4.5 Recommendations related to the issue of business owner-managers information sharing

The recommendations of students and teachers related to the general issue of owner-managers information sharing are as follows:

- Owner-managers should be interested in the project and share the required information.
- Teachers should be involved in identifying the information needed to develop a project and to ensure that the enterprise could provide it.
- Owner-managers should be assured of the confidentiality of the information used and generated during the project.

Appendix 13 presents a detailed list of the recommendations made by the different stakeholders in this area.

7.2.4.6 Recommendation related to the general issue of the development of projects in large enterprises

The broad recommendation that students and teachers made in relation to the general issue of developing projects in large enterprises is:

- The procedures that CDS use to develop projects in small businesses should be different from the procedures used in the development of projects in large enterprises.

Appendix 14 shows this recommendation in its original forms.

7.2.4.7 Outcomes of the instrumental use of evaluation

Specifically, the instrumental use promoted through the SRPPE approach could be identified by answering the following question: How did the evaluation support decision-making in order to improve the CDS programme?

Involving the different programme stakeholders in the evaluation of the CDS programme aided identification of the different interests that they had, and thus the conflicts that existed within the CDS programme. The instrumental use emphasised in the SRPPE approach sought to use these different interests and conflicts to support the improvement of the programme through the recommendations stakeholders provided. As noted by Morgan (1986)

“Conflicts can encourage forms of self-evaluation that can challenge conventional wisdom and theories in use ... (conflicts) can also do much to stimulate learning and change, helping to keep the organization in touch with what is going on in the environment. Conflicts can thus be an important source of innovation in that they encourage the parties involved to search for solutions to underlying problems” (p. 190).

In this sense most, if not all, of the recommendations made by the stakeholders were oriented to action. The influence of Patton’s (1997a) approach to evaluation guided this research project to seek the practical use of the evaluation. Therefore, the purpose was to identify not only what to improve but also how to improve it. While the case study presented the recommendations made by programme stakeholders, the choice of actions

to be implemented was the responsibility of the CDS manager, who could be influenced by stakeholders' interests in implementing them.

In the last personal interview held with the CDS manager, the researcher asked about the changes that she intended to make as a consequence of the evaluation. The CDS manager addressed aspects of CDS's process and structure. She highlighted the need to provide more information about the programme, and mentioned the need to have "clear information of the programme, which means: clear objectives and clear benefits" (CDS manager personal interview, date 20-05-2002, unit 67). She also wanted to implement an information plan of communication with the different programme stakeholders. Additionally, she mentioned the need to inform students, teachers and business owner-managers about the projects being developed through CDS. As an idea generated from the evaluation, the CDS manager intended to make a promotional video about the programme, in which students, teachers and business owner-managers could provide information and testimonies about their experiences of it and of developing projects.

As a consequence of the evaluation, the CDS manager also recognized the need to redesign the programme, due to conflicts generated by not having a standardized way of dealing with issues such as the development of projects in large enterprises, payment of teachers, and the charges made to the different enterprises. In addition, the CDS manager mentioned the need to change the programme, because new projects of ITESM were intended to provide support to small businesses through various means.

7.2.5 Discussion of CDS case study

The conclusions generated from this intervention are related to aspects of the intervention itself and the outcomes obtained from the conceptual, symbolic, and instrumental uses of CDS evaluation.

The following are advantages that can be noted from the conceptual, symbolic, and instrumental uses the SRPPE approach sought to promote in CDS evaluation:

- ✓ Identification of the different stakeholders' interests. In this sense, it was identified that students stressed their career interests: owner-managers stressed their task interests, emphasising the solution of the enterprise's problems; and teachers stressed their task interest, emphasising their academic orientation.
- ✓ Identification and exploration of conflicts within CDS programme. In this sense, there were identified aspects of the programme that triggered conflicts between stakeholders. These aspects referred to CDS's processes, to its structure, the politics of the programme and to the interests of the different stakeholders.
- ✓ Support for the improvement of the CDS programme through the recommendations provided by the programme stakeholders.
- ✓ Stimulation of individual and group learning and challenge of conventional assumptions and values of the CDS programme.
- ✓ Identification of topics for an agenda of negotiation that reflected the different views of stakeholders and that ideally would seek their accommodation to work together for the benefit of the different stakeholders.

As disadvantages of the conceptual, symbolic, and instrumental uses it can be noted that:

- × Seeking the participation of programme stakeholders to know the programme better and understand their different interests encouraged stakeholders to pursue their own agendas.
- × The different interests and conflicts may have their source in hidden agendas difficult to unveil, where political dynamics within the programme and dependency relationships between stakeholders have a role to play.
- × Conflicts between stakeholders may have a long history and they may even be institutionalized in aspects such as attitudes and values within the culture of the programme (Morgan, 1986).

Despite these disadvantages, it is considered that the SRPPE approach used to evaluate the CDS programme provided a better picture of the programme, allowed the programme manager a better understanding of the stakeholders and their needs.

identified the different interests stakeholders had, and provided a guide to the ways in which the programme could be improved.

It was the researcher's understanding that, prior to the evaluation being carried out, CDS stakeholders had not been involved in a participatory way in the programme evaluation. Previous evaluations of the CDS programme relied on a multiple-choice questionnaire which only owner-managers answered at the end of the project (see section 7.2.1). In the final personal interview with the CDS manager, she made the following comments:

CDS manager “But, you know what? Now I think that an evaluation is more than filling a questionnaire. An evaluation, with the work you have been doing, ...it is clear to me that... besides improving the programme, it is a forum for the programme stakeholders, to provide reflections and recommendations in a participative way.

And more than the quantitative side (of the evaluation) is the qualitative side: to know how participants feel, if I am the only one that knows all the information, why am I and the people participating? What benefits do we see in the programme? It is needed to justify the existence of the programme. I think that the programme should not be something that is imposed that I have to fulfil, but I see some advantages, I see some benefits and they are shared with other stakeholders (Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, units, 56, 57).

It is clear from the information collected and presented in this case study that an evaluation based only on quantitative measures is not as complete as a participatory evaluation which considers stakeholders' CC&I.

7.3 CASE STUDY 2: Supporting Young Entrepreneurs

Structure of case study 2

This section presents the case study developed within the organization called Mexican Entrepreneurship Development (DESEM). The DESEM case study is structured in the following way:

- Section 7.3.1 introduces the programme that DESEM wanted to evaluate. This section presents the general characteristics of the DESEM programme and it

identifies its stakeholders: young entrepreneurs, university coordinators and the DESEM programme managers.

- Section 7.3.2 presents the conceptual use of evaluation by identifying the particular CC&I of the different stakeholders in relation to their involvement in the DESEM programme.
- Section 7.3.3 presents the symbolic use of evaluation by identifying and developing four general issues of the DESEM programme. The general issues over DESEM are: procedures of the programme (section 7.3.3.1); role of the entrepreneurial advisor (section 7.3.3.2); DESEM's communication and interactions with young entrepreneurs (section 7.3.3.3); and the role of university coordinators (section 7.3.3.4).
- Section 7.3.4 presents the instrumental use of evaluation by identifying the recommendations DESEM stakeholders made to improve the programme.
- Section 7.3.5 concludes the DESEM case study by presenting a discussion of its outcomes.

7.3.1 The DESEM Programme

DESEM was a non-profit organization that sought to build an “entrepreneurial spirit” among young persons through education programmes aimed to establish businesses. DESEM was supported by donations from large enterprises; national foundations which supported social development, and by the fees they charged for delivering their programmes. One of the programmes offered by DESEM was the Young Entrepreneur programme, which supported the creation and development of micro and small businesses during 25 weeks. They followed an educative model which favoured practical experiences in the market place (Sistema DESEM, 1993).

The vision of the programme was to achieve a sustainable economic development through education. Its mission was to offer the programme to young persons, giving them the opportunity to know and understand, in a practical way, the experience of being an owner-manager and developing in them an entrepreneurial spirit (Sistema DESEM, 1993).

DESEM programme sought to help young persons to become young entrepreneurs by establishing a MSME. Their educative model sought:

- to transmit, in a practical way, the basic principles of managing a micro-small firm: the conditions for its creation, the type of activities involved, the resources needed, and the obligations acquired;
- to help young persons to understand the relationships of the micro-small firm with other elements of a market economy; and
- to help young persons to value the characteristics of an entrepreneur, such as initiative, creativity and team work (Sistema DESEM, 1993, p. 4).

DESEM programme managers (the general and the operational manager) made contacts with technical universities (vocational education) to offer the Young Entrepreneur programme as part of the academic curriculum. Students who decided to get involved in the Young Entrepreneur programme paid a registration fee. The University appointed a coordinator whose role was to support young entrepreneurs in their process of creating their micro or small firm. The university coordinator was also the link between DESEM, the University and the young entrepreneurs. DESEM also made use of “entrepreneurial advisors”. An entrepreneurial advisor was someone perceived as a successful owner-manager who helped DESEM in contacting governmental institutions which provided support to small firms. DESEM appointed the entrepreneurial advisors to help young entrepreneurs in their micro or small firms by sharing their experiences as owner-managers and by mentoring them.

To create a micro or small firm, a group of no more than 15 participants (students) followed DESEM’s procedures. These procedures consisted in organizing a manufacturing or commercial firm, focusing on the following areas: business management, finances, marketing, production and human resources. Participants were expected to acquire an initial capital for the operation of their firm by selling business shares, and after a period of operation, young entrepreneurs had to liquidate the firm. A committee formed by DESEM’s programme managers and DESEM’s council⁴³ selected the best among the firm from the firms created with the intention of linking it to a governmental economic agency that could support it.

⁴³ A body integrated by some entrepreneurial advisors and DESEM managers. They were in charge of supervising and approving DESEM activities; administering and acquiring resources for the programme, and of creating links with governmental agencies that support SMEs.

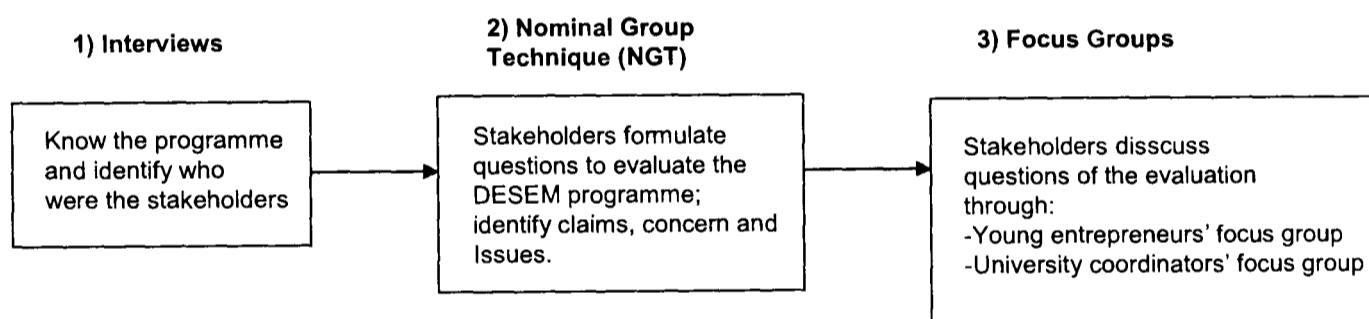
Previous procedure to evaluate DESEM programme

The procedure DESEM used to evaluate the programme was centred on the number of students involved in the Young Entrepreneur programme, the number of firms created and the number of events organized by the programme (e.g. talks and seminars). The information collected was used to compare the performance of different offices of DESEM in different regions.

Evaluation procedure proposed in this research

Young entrepreneurs, university coordinators and DESEM programme managers were identified as stakeholders. Figure 7.5 depicts the process followed in order to collect data for the evaluation of the DESEM programme. The Entrepreneurial advisors were interested in DESEM evaluation; however they did not wish to be directly involved in the focus group activities.

Figure 7.5 Process followed in collecting data for the evaluation of the DESEM programme

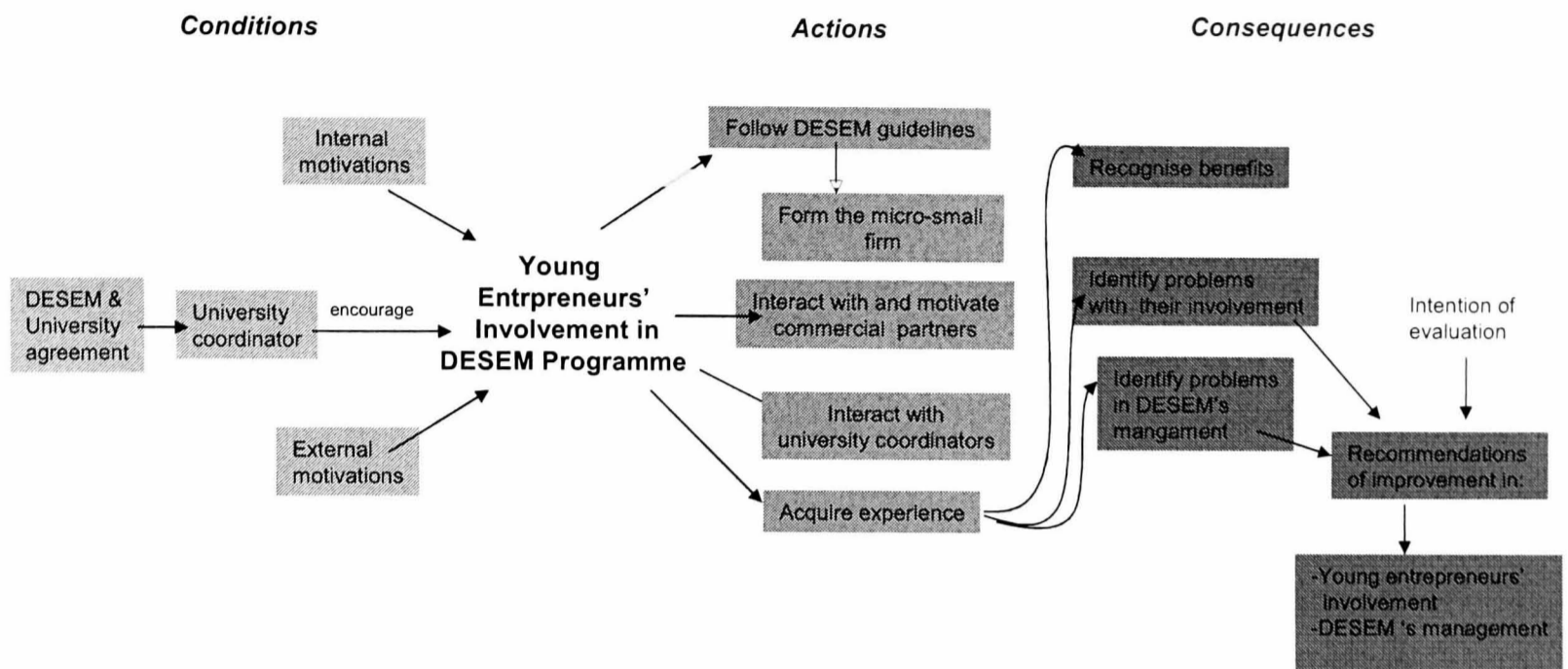


One way to describe the Young Entrepreneur programme in detail is by describing the way the stakeholders were involved in the programme; the conditions, actions and consequences of their involvement. The following sections describe these, based on the accounts that the programme stakeholders gave of their involvement.

7.3.1.1 Young entrepreneurs' involvement in the DESEM programme

Figure 7.6 depicts the involvement of young entrepreneurs in the DESEM programme. The diagram shows the relationships (represented by the arrows) between the conditions, actions and consequences of young entrepreneurs' involvement in the programme.

Figure 7.6 Diagram of young entrepreneurs' involvement in the DESEM programme



Conditions

DESEM managers made agreements with universities to offer the Young Entrepreneur Programme for 6 months as part of a university course, and the university appointed a university coordinator in charge of presenting the programme to students and encouraging their involvement. Students that decided to be involved in the programme, generally, showed personal interest in developing a micro or small firm. Therefore, in their involvement on the programme, young entrepreneurs were influenced by their internal motivation to create a firm. They were also influenced by a motivation to put into practice the knowledge they had acquired, and to gain work experience. Young entrepreneurs were also influenced to participate in the DESEM programme because it offered them the structure to create a firm and recognition for their participation. These were considered external motivations which offered young entrepreneurs the opportunity to experience being their own employers and a source of employment for others.

Actions

Through the DESEM programme, young entrepreneurs formed their firms using DESEM procedures which consisted of:

- following detailed activities and formats related to areas such as: finance, marketing, production and human resources;
- acquiring capital for running of the firm; and
- liquidating the firm at the end of the six months of the programme.

Young entrepreneurs also interacted with their partners and with the university coordinator, who was the link with DESEM. By participating in the DESEM programme, young entrepreneurs acquired experience in managing their firm.

Consequences

As a consequence of the experience gained by being involved in the programme, young entrepreneurs identified some problems related to the putting the programme into operation, for example: the start-up of the firm at an economic micro-level; difficulties in acquiring capital for the firm; inexperience in managing the firm; the need for commitment from business partners; and the need to work as a team.

Young entrepreneurs also identified problems in relation to aspects of structure and process of the DESEM programme, for example, the lack of information about and promotion of the DESEM programme; the need to receive consultancy in the areas on which the programme focused (e.g. marketing, production, finances, and human resources); and the need to redefine the role of the entrepreneurial advisor.

Young entrepreneurs recognized the following benefits from the programme:

- They developed their sense of social responsibility.
- They complemented in a practical way the theory they learnt in lectures.
- They learned to work in teams.
- They perceived a gain in maturity.

The experiences young entrepreneurs gained in the DESEM programme, in addition to the intentions of the evaluation, encouraged them to recommend ways of improving the programme. These recommendations were related to the problems in putting the programme into operation and to the structure and process aspects of the programme.

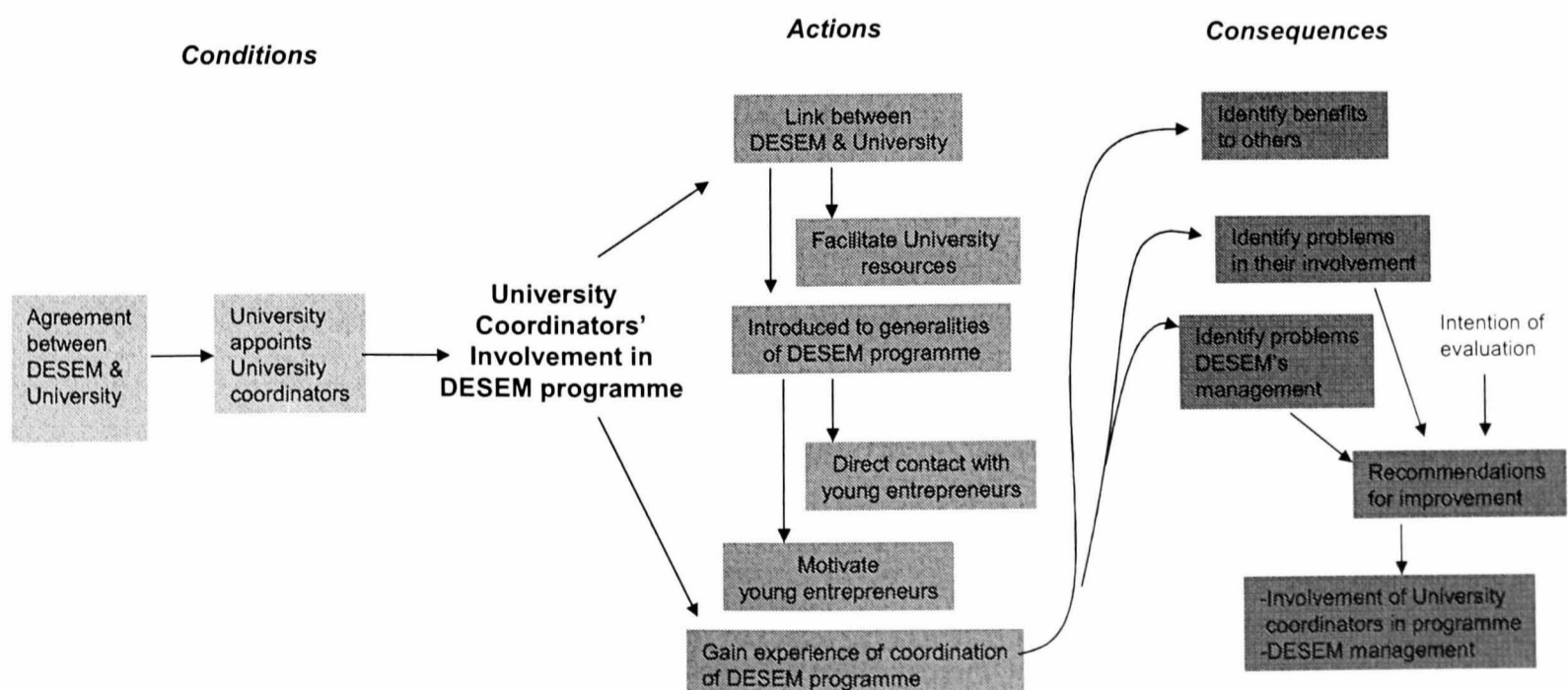
Overall, young entrepreneurs' involvement in the programme implied that:

- they were involved in the DESEM programme as part of a vocational education course.
- Young entrepreneurs formed a micro or small firm following DESEM procedures.
- DESEM procedures focused on marketing, finances, production, and human resources areas of the firm; on the acquisition of capital to run the firm and on the liquidation of the firm at the end of the programme.
- Young entrepreneurs received support from a university coordinator.
- At the end of the programme, one of the young entrepreneurs' firms was selected by the DESEM council and recommended to a governmental agency in order to receive support for its development.

7.3.1.2 University coordinators' involvement in the DESEM programme

Figure 7.7 depicts university coordinators' involvement in the DESEM programme. This diagram shows the relationships (represented by the arrows) between the conditions, actions and consequences of the university coordinators' involvement in the programme.

Figure 7.7 Diagram of university coordinators' involvement in the DESEM programme



Conditions

As indicated previously, DESEM made agreements with technical universities to offer the programme. The universities appointed coordinators to become involved in the DESEM programme.

Actions

The University coordinator's role was to be a link between DESEM and the students of the University. University coordinators were introduced to the generalities of the programme in order to monitor young entrepreneurs and help them to follow the programme procedures. Their role was to facilitate the support that the University offered to young entrepreneurs in the form of materials, economic resources and teachers' consultancy. University coordinators also supported young entrepreneurs by motivating them when facing difficulties. In their involvement in the programme, university coordinators gained experience in the coordination of DESEM programme.

Consequences

As a consequence of participating in the DESEM programme, university coordinators identified benefits that young entrepreneurs received by being involved in the programme. University coordinators also identified problems related to the structure of the programme, in specific with DESEM's management and its involvement in the programme.

University coordinators' experience in the DESEM programme, in addition to the intentions of the evaluation, made them suggest ways to improve the programme. These suggestions were directly related to the problems that they had identified related to the structure of the programme.

University coordinators' involvement in the programme implied that:

- University coordinators were appointed by the University to be the link between DESEM, the University and the young entrepreneurs.

- University coordinators were in charge of facilitating the support Universities provided to the young entrepreneurs.
- University coordinators were in charge of monitoring how young entrepreneurs followed DESEM programme procedures.
- University coordinators offered support and motivation to young entrepreneurs in the creation of their firms.

7.3.2 Conceptual use: Learning about the programme

The descriptions of young entrepreneurs' and university coordinators' involvement in the DESEM programme helped to identify the stakeholders' particular CC&I related to it. The following sections present these CC&I, allowing better knowledge and understanding of the programme from the stakeholders' perspectives.

7.3.2.1 Young entrepreneurs' claims, concerns and issues

Young entrepreneurs' particular claims

1. Young entrepreneurs claimed that the DESEM programme helped them to develop ideas for business and to put them into practice.
2. Young entrepreneurs claimed that the DESEM programme helped them to set-up a micro or small firm.
3. Young entrepreneurs claimed that through their involvement in the DESEM programme they learnt to manage their firm.
4. Young entrepreneurs claimed that through their involvement in the DESEM programme they acquired work experience.
5. Young entrepreneurs claimed that their involvement in the DESEM programme allowed them to increase their sense of social responsibility.
6. Young entrepreneurs claimed that the DESEM programme had appropriate objectives.
7. Young entrepreneurs claimed that their involvement in the DESEM programme gave them an increased sense of responsibility and maturity.
8. Young entrepreneurs claimed that university coordinators supported them appropriately in the process of forming a micro or small firm.

Young entrepreneurs' particular concerns

1. Young entrepreneurs were concerned about the dissemination of the DESEM programme.
2. Young entrepreneurs expressed their concern about DESEM's direct interaction with them.
3. Young entrepreneurs were concerned about the motivation that DESEM gave them.
4. Young entrepreneurs expressed their concern related to DESEM's communication with them.
5. Young entrepreneurs were concerned about the information on the DESEM programme.
6. Young entrepreneurs were concerned about the support and advice they received from the technical Universities in which they studied.

Young entrepreneurs' particular issues

1. Young entrepreneurs had disagreements about the procedures they needed to follow in the DESEM programme.
2. Young entrepreneurs had disagreements about the entrepreneurial advisor's role.

7.3.2.2 University coordinators' claims, concerns and issues

University coordinators' particular claims

1. University coordinators claimed that DESEM helped young entrepreneurs to learn about team work, commitment and responsibility.
2. University coordinators claimed that DESEM helped young entrepreneurs to gain work experience.
3. University coordinators claimed that the successful consolidated firms were a source of motivation to young entrepreneurs.
4. University coordinators claimed that the programme had a good operative side.
5. University coordinators claimed that the programme had appropriate objectives.

University coordinators' particular concerns

1. University coordinators were concerned about their role within the DESEM programme.
2. University coordinators were concerned about DESEM not giving an effective follow up to firms created, nor to the young entrepreneurs.

University coordinators' particular issues

1. University coordinators have disagreements about the direct contact DESEM had with young entrepreneurs.
2. University coordinators had disagreements over the role of the entrepreneurial advisor.
3. University coordinators had disagreements about the procedures young entrepreneurs followed in the DESEM programme.

7.3.2.3 Outcomes of the conceptual use of the evaluation

The conceptual use promoted through the SRPPE approach could be identified, as with the first case study, by answering the following question: What was learnt about the DESEM programme? And from whom?

In this sense, were learnt positive aspects of the programme from young entrepreneurs and university coordinators. For example, for young entrepreneurs, the DESEM programme represented support to develop a small firm, a source of working experience and a means to increase their social awareness, responsibility and maturity. University coordinators learnt that they saw the benefits offered by the programme as more directed towards supporting young entrepreneurs in the process of developing their small businesses. The positive aspects of the programme identified through the claims of the stakeholders represented the activities the programme should continue to support. However, in the view of the other stakeholders, things needed to be improved in the programme. Their concerns and the issues that they raised helped to unveil the diversity of interests within the programme that needed to be considered in seeking its improvement.

From young entrepreneurs and university coordinators, it was learnt that their concerns and issues were related to aspects of the processes followed within the programme and its structure. However, their divergent interests influenced these concerns and issues. Morgan's (1986) political metaphor of an organization was used in order to understand the different interests within the politics of DESEM programme, as in the first case study. Morgan expressed interests in relation to three interconnected domains: *task interests* (related with the work one has to perform), *career interests* (related to the person's aspirations and visions of the workplace and the future it may hold) and *extramural interests* (related to the personality, attitudes, values, preferences, and beliefs that influence the way a person acts in relation to his/her job and career interests). The understanding of interests in Morgan's terms helped to gain a better understanding of the programme and its stakeholders by identifying possible sources of tension between them because of their different interests. In this sense, young entrepreneurs' CC&I emphasised their *career interests* and *extramural interests* as they perceived the DESEM programme as means to support the development of their firm and a way of gaining responsibility and maturity. University coordinators' CC&I emphasised their *task interests*, as they saw the DESEM programme as a way in which young entrepreneurs learnt attitudes (such as team work, commitment, responsibility) necessary in the development of a business. In addition, university coordinators also emphasised their *career interests*, as they were concerned about the role they played within the programme.

Additionally, as part of the conceptual use of evaluation, the researcher considered that the SRPPE approach promoted individual learning and group learning. In this sense, the involvement of the programme stakeholders in the evaluation process allowed them to build knowledge about the programme and about the process of evaluation. It also allowed participants to reflect on their own experiences and that of others. For example, the programme manager raised questions (at the end of the session where the evaluation questions were defined) about how to make the DESEM programme more attractive to young entrepreneurs and how to improve it. The facilitator suggested that young entrepreneurs could help in answering those questions. One university coordinator then commented:

University coordinator “I think that the involvement of young entrepreneurs in the process of the programme is very important. This is the first time that we have participated in the DESEM programme, and it won’t be the last. Young entrepreneurs could also be involved in sharing their experiences and what they learnt from the programme with other young entrepreneurs. Young entrepreneurs could also provide advice to other programme participants” (NGT session, unit 71).

The development of this case study was intended to serve the learning purposes of the evaluation, by documenting the evaluation process and by giving the opportunity to DESEM stakeholders to reflect on the programme; to reflect on the influence the evaluation had, and to note whether recommendations were put in practice.

7.3.3 Symbolic use: Identifying the political stances of the DESEM programme

The symbolic use of evaluation refers to its use in dealing with the programme’s political stances and with the persuasive areas of the evaluation. This section identifies and presents the general issues surrounding DESEM. These general issues emerged by comparing the claims, concerns and issues (CC&I) of DESEM stakeholders (see above). The general issues of the DESEM programme represent those topics on which there were declarations of disagreement between young entrepreneurs and university coordinators, due to the different interests that they had. The general issues of the DESEM programme are considered a means to examine the conditions and the complexity of the issues raised in the evaluation. The general issues are considered examples of the need the DESEM programme had to deal with political stances and with the persuasion of programme stakeholders. Table 7.3 presents the general issues on which this section concentrates.

Table 7.3 General issues of the DESEM Programme

-
1. DESEM programme procedures
 2. Role of the Entrepreneurial Advisor
 3. DESEM's communication and interaction with young entrepreneurs
 4. Role of University Coordinators

The following subsections present the different opinions programme stakeholders had in relation to the four general issues of the DESEM programme identified.

7.3.3.1 General Issue 1: Procedures of the DESEM programme

For young entrepreneurs, the procedures followed in the DESEM programme represented a particular issue (see section 7.3.2.1, issue 1). While some young entrepreneurs claimed that DESEM procedures were a useful guide to defining the different departments that their firm ought to have, others found them of little use because they had a lack of guidance on how to structure and set up their small firm. As noted by one of the young entrepreneurs:

Young entrepreneur 2 “When we were following DESEM’s formats, which were part of the programme procedures, we thought we fulfilled all the requirements needed to be selected to receive economic support in order to continue with the firm. However, our enterprise was not selected due to the lack of advice we had had from the entrepreneurial advisor. The entrepreneurial advisor did not fulfil his role. We couldn’t show him our work, we didn’t have feedback from him and we didn’t know the things we were doing wrong” (First young entrepreneurs’ focus group, unit 144).

In addition, young entrepreneurs had concerns about DESEM’s procedures for selling business shares in order to acquire capital. Young entrepreneurs faced difficulties with this because the DESEM programme was not known. Additionally, they expressed their concerns about the continuity of the firm. They noted that they did not know whether the DESEM was going to continue supporting them. As expressed by a young entrepreneur:

Young entrepreneur 1 “I would expect DESEM to follow up our firm closely. In that way the DESEM managers could know if they had achieved what was expected. I expected the DESEM programme to be more than a course where you received only a diploma and that is all. DESEM has more responsibility. If DESEM is forming young entrepreneurs, they should be informed about what is happening to them and the firms created through the programme” (First young entrepreneurs’ focus group, units 165-167).

In contrast, university coordinators claimed that the DESEM programme procedures did not represent a problem for young entrepreneurs, because young entrepreneurs had advice from teachers who knew about the areas on which the programme focused. However, university coordinators agreed with the students' concern in relation to the capital they had to gather in order to start the firm and in relation to the continuity of the firm (see section 7.3.2.2, issue 3).

A problem identified by DESEM managers in relation to this general issue was that, at the time of the evaluation, the DESEM programme was offered in different universities and each university worked in a different way. The discrepancies of opinions identified were because the DESEM programme did not have standardized ways of involving the different universities. In this sense, some universities offered young entrepreneurs consultancy on how to follow the programme's procedures, while others did not provide any guidance. The operations manager of DESEM programme noted that: "One of the main problems that DESEM has is coordination with the universities, because each university is different, and therefore we have to learn to treat them in different ways" (NGT session, unit 33).

Before moving on to the second of the four general issues of DESEM surrounding the symbolic use of the evaluation, it is worth noting that the general issue of DESEM programme procedures reflected concerns about aspects of its structure. In summary, on the one hand, for some young entrepreneurs the procedures followed in the DESEM programme did not represent a problem, while others were concerned especially with the lack of advice and guidance from entrepreneurial advisors, and with the problems they faced in acquiring capital for the firm. On the other hand, for university coordinators the procedures followed in the DESEM programme did not represent a problem. Like the young entrepreneurs, university coordinators were more concerned about the initial capital to run the firm and its continuity.

7.3.3.2 General Issue 2: Role of the entrepreneurial advisor

At the beginning of the case study it was noted that DESEM managers appointed an entrepreneurial advisor to aid young entrepreneurs in their micro or small firms by

sharing his/her experiences and by giving them consultancy. Young entrepreneurs had both favourable and unfavourable opinions about the role of entrepreneurial advisors (see section 7.3.2.1, issue 2). While some young entrepreneurs considered that the DESEM programme was well structured (including the roles of an entrepreneurial advisor), other young entrepreneurs noted that this was a major weakness of the programme, as noted in the following comments:

- Young entrepreneur 2* “DESEM should give more attention to the entrepreneurial advisor’s involvement. In our case we never had a meeting with him” (First young entrepreneurs’ focus group, unit 117).
- Young entrepreneur 2* “We lacked support from the entrepreneurial advisor assigned by DESEM... The entrepreneurial advisor made a lot of promises to us, but we never had action, never, never. We tried to contact him, but we never achieved anything, not even an appointment, nor any advice” (First young entrepreneurs’ focus group, units 128-129).

The same situation was expressed by young entrepreneurs in the session where the questions of the evaluation were defined and in the second focus group. In a similar way, university coordinators considered the idea of involving an entrepreneurial advisor appropriate because they could enact appropriate models to follow and were considered a source of motivation and experience for young entrepreneurs. However, university coordinators were also concerned about the actual role entrepreneurial advisors performed (see section 7.3.2.2, issue 2). In this sense, a university coordinator noted:

- University coordinator 3* “Young entrepreneurs lacked the support and motivation from the entrepreneurial advisor” (University coordinators’ focus group, unit 18).
- University coordinator 2* “Entrepreneurial advisors did not fulfil their role. In some cases, they were not of the same business area and therefore young entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial advisor did not understand each other” (University coordinators’ focus group, unit 59).

The general issue of the role of the entrepreneurial advisor reflected concerns in the aspect of structure of the DESEM programme. Specifically, it reflected the different views programme stakeholders had on what the programme expected from

entrepreneurial advisors. Generally programme stakeholders praised the ideal role of the entrepreneurial advisor; however, they were disappointed about the involvement, support and advice that entrepreneurial advisors gave in reality. This was identified as one of the main complaints programme stakeholders had about the DESEM programme. In addition, the identification of this issue enabled identification of an interplay between aspects of structure of the DESEM programme and aspects of politics within the programme. The DESEM managers involved entrepreneurial advisors as an ideal source of experience and motivation to young entrepreneurs, and at the same time entrepreneurial advisors helped DESEM to contact governmental institutions that provide support to small firms.

7.3.3.3 General Issue 3: DESEM’s communication and interaction with young entrepreneurs

The third of four general issues around DESEM in the symbolic use of evaluation refers to the communication and interaction between DESEM and the young entrepreneurs. In this sense, the latter expressed their concerns with the communication and interaction they had with DESEM (see section 7.3.2.1, concerns 2 and 4). They perceived a distant relationship. This distant relationship was considered a consequence of the lack of direct interaction and motivation that DESEM managers provided and to the lack of effective feedback loops. As a consequence, DESEM managers did not know, from direct sources, the problems that young entrepreneurs were facing in the programme. For example, DESEM managers did not know the problems young entrepreneurs had with DESEM’s procedures, nor did they know about the problems young entrepreneurs had with the poor involvement of entrepreneurial advisors, as noted in the focus group sessions:

Young entrepreneur 2 “DESEM has good objectives and structure, but we also need their motivation and we need to have direct contact with their managers. DESEM should be interested in the firm’s progress. I do not want to criticise; this is a constructive comment” (First young entrepreneurs’ focus group, unit 76).

When discussing the programme information that was not clear for young entrepreneurs, the following problem was raised:

Young entrepreneur 2 “What happened was that DESEM managers told us in a meeting that they were offering seminars and talks related to the different areas of the firm. These seminars were offered to those that wanted them or needed them... However, we were never informed about their availability” (Second young entrepreneurs’ focus group, units 96-97).

Later, another participant made the following comment:

Young entrepreneur 1 “We did not have the advice that we were told DESEM was going to give us, because the entrepreneurial advisor did not fulfil his role” (Second young entrepreneurs’ focus group, unit 106).

The concerns raised by young entrepreneurs helped to identify things that in practice were not working in the DESEM programme. The lack of direct communication and interaction with young entrepreneurs prevented DESEM managers from identifying the conflicts that were created. DESEM assumed that entrepreneurial advisors were fulfilling their role effectively. However, young entrepreneurs considered they were not receiving the advice needed from DESEM, nor from entrepreneurial advisors.

As with young entrepreneurs, university coordinators expressed their concerns about DESEM’s interaction and communication with young entrepreneurs. Additionally, university coordinators noted the need for DESEM to have more contact with young entrepreneurs, to be informed about the progress of the firm. University coordinators claimed that this direct contact between DESEM and young entrepreneurs was a source of motivation to young entrepreneurs (see section 7.3.2.2, issue 1).

Broadly speaking, the general issue of DESEM’s communication and interaction with young entrepreneurs reflected concerns with aspects of structure and processes followed within the DESEM programme. In this sense, young entrepreneurs were particularly concerned about the distant relationship they had with DESEM managers and their lack of knowledge of the problems young entrepreneurs faced with the involvement of entrepreneurial advisors. University coordinators had disagreements about the communication and interaction between DESEM and young entrepreneurs. While some university coordinators claimed that the contact with DESEM was adequate, other

university coordinators perceived ineffective loops of communication and interaction between DESEM managers and young entrepreneurs.

7.3.3.4 General Issue 4: Role of university coordinators

The last general issue of the DESEM programme relating to the symbolic use of the evaluation is related to the role of university coordinators. Young entrepreneurs claimed that university coordinators encouraged them to continue with the idea of forming their micro or small firms (see section 7.3.2.1, claim 8). DESEM's procedures held that the university coordinator's role was to be the link between universities and the programme and to support young entrepreneurs to face the problems in the integration of the firm (Sistema DESEM, 1993). However, university coordinators expressed their concern about the role they had in the DESEM programme (see section 7.3.2.2, concern 1).

University coordinators' concern was linked to the perceived lack of guidance that young entrepreneurs received to develop their micro-small firm, as noted in the following statement made by a university coordinator:

University coordinator 1 “As university coordinator I would like to know how to motivate and support more the young entrepreneurs in the development of their firms. University coordinators should be trained, because if young entrepreneurs do not receive advice from entrepreneurial advisors, at least the coordinator should have the knowledge to give them the advice they need. University coordinators should be trained in the areas the programme emphasises and should be informed about the development of the procedures followed within the programme” (NGT session, units 41-43).

This statement reflects aspects of the structure of the programme, and specifically reflects university coordinators' concerns about the information and the training they required (but did not receive) in order to fulfil their role more appropriately. They considered that their role should be not only a link between DESEM and universities but also a source of direct advice to young entrepreneurs.

Broadly speaking, the differences between the stakeholders' view about the university coordinators' role and what the DESEM programme expected from them reflected concerns with aspects of the structure of the programme and the influence of university coordinators' career interests. In this sense, the different views reflected the complexity of the conditions in which programme stakeholders were involved. On the one hand, young entrepreneurs, faced with a lack of advice from DESEM managers and from entrepreneurial advisors, claimed that university coordinators helped them in their involvement in the programme. On the other hand, university coordinators noted their limited role as defined by DESEM and their lack of training.

7.3.3.5 Outcomes of the symbolic use of evaluation

As recognized in the first case study, Morgan's (1986) political metaphor of organizations is useful to identify the outcomes of the symbolic use of evaluation, because it accepts the inevitability of organizational politics and recognizes the different interests of individuals.

The general issues surrounding DESEM discussed above helped to identify aspects of the programme which triggered disagreements between stakeholders; these aspects referred mainly to DESEM's structure.

The development of these general issues round DESEM also helped to unveil conflicts because of the interplay between its structure and the political dynamics within the programme. For example, there seemed to be a conflict that grouped university coordinators and young entrepreneurs versus entrepreneurial advisors and the managers of the programme. On the one hand, as noted previously, some entrepreneurial advisors formed part of the DESEM council, and thus they were in charge of approving its activities, of administering and acquiring resources for the programme and of creating links with governmental organizations that support SMEs. On the other hand, entrepreneurial advisors were also in charge of supporting young entrepreneurs in their micro or small firms by sharing their experiences and by mentoring them. This organizational structure created conflicts because, in the eyes of university coordinators and young entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial advisors were not fulfilling their role; this was

acknowledged as one of the major sources of complaint about the DESEM programme. This conflict was stressed because, in the view of DESEM managers, entrepreneurial advisors fulfilled their administrative role and they had not been aware of their deficiencies in providing support to young entrepreneurs.

In addition, the development of the general issues surrounding DESEM also helped to unveil relationships of dependency that the researcher inferred as existing between the stakeholders, such as:

- Young entrepreneurs wanted to develop an SME, to gain experience, put their knowledge into practice and increase their responsibility and maturity. A way to do so was through their involvement in the DESEM programme. Young entrepreneurs depended on the information they received from DESEM managers and depended on the advice and involvement of university coordinators.
- University coordinators were appointed by the University to support young entrepreneurs in the process of creating their firm, and were the link with DESEM managers. They depended on the relationship developed with DESEM managers and depended on students' willingness to be involved in the DESEM programme.
- DESEM's existence inherently depended on the involvement of young entrepreneurs and university coordinators in the programme. In addition, DESEM managers also depended on support from the council.

The general issues discussed above helped to identify the different views programme stakeholders had; in this sense they helped DESEM managers to examine the conditions that surrounded each general issue; helped them to understand the complexity of each issue; and had the potential to be used as a way to legitimate the changes needed in the DESEM programme. The discussion of these general issues allowed the different interests that DESEM stakeholders had to be understood. In this sense, the general issues reflected young entrepreneurs' extramural and career interests, especially focused on the support the programme offered them to develop their firms. They also reflected university coordinators' task and career interests, especially focused on their role within the DESEM programme. Finally, the researcher considered that by understanding these

different interests, stakeholders could be persuaded to seek ways of improving the programme. As in the first case study (taking into account the purpose of the evaluation of seeking ways of improving the programme) the following section concentrates on the recommendations for improvement made by stakeholders. The following section analyses how the DESEM programme was fostered through the instrumental use of evaluation.

7.3.4 Instrumental use: Supporting decision-making

In the same way as in case study 1, the evaluation process focused on seeking ways of improving the programme. The DESEM programme stakeholders were encouraged to provide practical recommendations to improve the problems they identified in the DESEM programme, with the objective of identifying not only what, in their view, was needed but also how it could be done. This is considered the instrumental use of evaluation because it refers to its support for decision-making and action-taking (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991; Weiss, 1986).

Taking into account the four general issues of the DESEM programme identified and analysed before, the following subsections present the summaries of the recommendations made by young entrepreneurs and university coordinators involved in the evaluation of DESEM.

Table 7.4 relates the sections in which the general issues surrounding DESEM were previously discussed, in the symbolic use of evaluation, to the sections in which the recommendations of DESEM stakeholders are presented, as part of the instrumental use of evaluation.

Table 7.4 Relationship between symbolic and instrumental use in DESEM evaluation

| Symbolic use of evaluation | | Instrumental use of evaluation | |
|--|----------------|--|----------------|
| <i>General issue</i> | <i>Section</i> | <i>Recommendation</i> | <i>Section</i> |
| Procedures of the DESEM programme | 7.3.3.1 | Recommendations related to the general issue of the procedures of the DESEM programme | 7.3.4.1 |
| Role of the entrepreneurial advisor | 7.3.3.2 | Recommendations related to the general issue of the entrepreneurial advisors' role | 7.3.4.2 |
| DESEM's communication and interaction with young entrepreneurs | 7.3.3.3 | Recommendations related to the general issue of DESEM's communication and interaction with young entrepreneurs | 7.3.4.3 |
| Role of university coordinators | 7.3.3.4 | Recommendations related to the general issue of the university coordinators's role | 7.3.4.4 |

7.3.4.1 Recommendations related to the general issue of the procedures of the DESEM programme

The recommendations that young entrepreneurs and university coordinators made in relation to the general issue of procedures of DESEM programme, in summary, were:

- to improve the advice that young entrepreneurs receive as part of the procedures of the programme;
- to improve the publicity of the DESEM programme; and
- to ensure the continuity of the firm and the support that DESEM could give by making links with governmental agencies that could support small firms.

Appendix 15 presents a detailed list of the recommendations made by the different stakeholders on the issue of the procedures of the DESEM programme.

7.3.4.2 Recommendations related to the general issue of the entrepreneurial advisors' role

The recommendations made by young entrepreneurs and university coordinators in relation to the general issue of entrepreneurial advisors' role could be summarized as follows.

- DESEM should consider the interests and area of expertise of entrepreneurial advisors in order to assign them to the different small firms.
- DESEM should appoint entrepreneurial advisors from the same region as the participant small firms to improve the advice that young entrepreneurs receive.

- DESEM should also monitor the performance of entrepreneurial advisors in the programme.

Appendix 16 presents a detailed list of the recommendations made by the different stakeholders on the issue of the entrepreneurial advisor's role.

7.3.4.3 Recommendations related to the general issue of DESEM's communication and interaction with young entrepreneurs

The recommendations that young entrepreneurs and university coordinators made in relation to the general issue of DESEM's communication and interaction with young entrepreneurs, in summary, were:

- DESEM should involve young entrepreneurs in sharing the experiences and practices they had had in the small firms created in the programme.
- DESEM should acknowledge the young entrepreneurs' involvement in the programme.
- DESEM should inform young entrepreneurs about the procedures involved during the programme and at its end.
- DESEM should have mechanisms of feedback from young entrepreneurs as part of the procedures of the programme, and more communication with university coordinators.

Appendix 17 presents a detailed list of the recommendations made by the different stakeholders in the areas of DESEM's communication and interaction.

7.3.4.4 Recommendations related to the general issue of the university coordinator's role

The recommendations that young entrepreneurs and university coordinators made in relation to the general issue of the university coordinator's role could be summarized as follows:

- DESEM should encourage university coordinators to have a more active role in providing advice to young entrepreneurs.

- DESEM should inform and train university coordinators in areas related to the procedures followed within the programme.
- DESEM should encourage university coordinators to share their experiences as part of the training of the programme.

Appendix 18 presents a detailed list of the recommendations made by the different stakeholders on the issue of university coordinator's role.

7.3.4.5 Outcomes of the instrumental use of evaluation

As in the first case study, the instrumental use promoted through the SRPPE approach could be identified by answering the following question: How did the evaluation support decision-making in order to improve the DESEM programme?

The involvement of the different programme stakeholders in the evaluation of the DESEM programme aided identification of the different interest stakeholders had and thus the conflicts that existed within the programme. The instrumental use emphasised in the SRPPE approach sought to use these different interests and conflicts to support the improvement of the programme through the recommendations stakeholders provided. These recommendations were considered by DESEM stakeholders as ways of improving the programme and represented the stakeholders' choices of action that needed to be taken. These recommendations are considered to be oriented towards an instrumental use of the evaluation. However, the decision to implement these recommendations, if any, might depend on the commitment of DESEM managers to the evaluation, the benefits which they considered the evaluation brought to the programme and to stakeholders and even on the influence stakeholders had. In the last interview with the programme's operational manager, the researcher asked about the impact the evaluation had and the recommendations that it was intended to put into practice. The intentions expressed were as follows (personal interview, date 24-05-2002):

- to implement a strategy in order to follow up the small firms created by the DESEM programme;
- to abolish the role of the entrepreneurial advisor as a source of advice and expertise to young entrepreneurs and to offer the support of a specialized advisor from DESEM;

- to extend by one month the duration of the programme in order to provide specialized consultancy in the areas emphasised by the programme;
- to create a schedule of visits and conferences that DESEM would give in each university;
- to encourage young entrepreneurs to share their experiences with other young entrepreneurs;
- to improve the publicity for the programme; and
- to train and work closely with university coordinators, because of their direct contact with young entrepreneurs.

7.3.5 Discussion of the DESEM case study

As with the first case study, the conclusions of this intervention refer to the process of the evaluation carried out as well as to the outcomes obtained from the conceptual, symbolic, and instrumental uses of the evaluation of DESEM.

The following are advantages that can be noted from the conceptual, symbolic, and instrumental uses the SRPPE approach sought to promote in DESEM evaluation:

- ✓ Identification of the different stakeholders' interests. In this sense, it was identified that young entrepreneurs stressed their extramural and career interests, emphasising their interest in the programme as a means to support the development of their SMEs, while university coordinators stressed their task and career interests emphasising their interest in the role they played within the programme.
- ✓ Identification and exploration of conflicts within the DESEM programme. In this sense, the trigger of conflicts between stakeholders was identified as the structure of the programme. The identification of this conflict helped to unveil the interplay between structure of DESEM and the political dynamics within the programme as another source of conflict in the programme.
- ✓ Support for the improvement of the DESEM programme through the recommendations provided by the programme stakeholders.
- ✓ Stimulation of learning and challenge of DESEM's conventional assumptions and values.
- ✓ Identification of topics for an agenda of negotiation by developing the conceptual, symbolic, and instrumental uses of evaluation. The DESEM case

study presented a negotiation agenda between programme stakeholders that reflected their different views and that ideally would seek their accommodation to work together for the benefit of the different stakeholders.

A disadvantage of the conceptual, symbolic, and instrumental uses that was noted was:

- × The different interests and conflicts reflected by DESEM stakeholders may have had their sources in hidden agendas difficult to unveil, where political dynamics within the programme and dependency relationships between stakeholders had a role to play.

Despite this disadvantage, the researcher considered that the SRPPE approach used to evaluate the DESEM programme provided a better picture of the programme, enabled the programme managers to understand better the stakeholders, their needs and interests, and provided a guide to the ways in which, from the stakeholders' point of view, the programme could be improved.

As in the CDS evaluation, the DESEM case study confirmed the importance of considering intangible aspects (stakeholders' CC&I) as part of the evaluation process. As with the first case study, the way in which the DESEM programme had previously evaluated its performance concentrated on statistics (e.g. the number of young entrepreneurs involved in the programme, the number of businesses formed and the number of events organized). This case study demonstrates that these figures did not reveal many valuable views about the programme; nor did they give a guide to ways of improving the DESEM programme.

So far, this chapter has presented the case studies developed for each of the programmes evaluated during the fieldwork. It concludes by noting the similarities and differences between the two cases, and aims to deepen the understanding of the contexts which supported the conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation in the programmes.

7.4 Conclusion

Both cases reinforce the idea that the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs should complement their traditional evaluation approaches (focused on tangible factors which emphasise programme outcomes, e.g. number of firms involved in the programme; and number of events organized), with the consideration of intangible factors that reveal the claims, concerns and issues of stakeholders involved in and affected by the programme, as established during the literature review.

Here, it was clear that the evaluations of the CDS and the DESEM programmes carried out in this research helped to increase understanding of the programmes and the needs of the stakeholders. On the one hand, the claims of the stakeholders of both programmes proved useful to identify the activities that both programmes should continue to support, as they represented favourable aspects. On the other hand, the process of evaluation and the CC&I of the stakeholders helped to unveil their different interests, their conflicts, and the political dynamics within the programmes, which needed to be addressed in order to improve them.

In the evaluation of the CDS programme (the first case study) and in the evaluation of the DESEM programme (the second case study), the usefulness of the conceptual use of evaluation was emphasised because stakeholders were willing to learn more about the programme and about other stakeholders. They were also willing to reflect on their roles and that of other stakeholders. In addition, the identification of the stakeholders' CC&I allowed the different interests of the stakeholders to be revealed. For example, the evaluation of the CDS programme revealed completely different interests among the three groups of stakeholders. Students stressed their career interests, emphasising the work experience they needed; business owner-managers stressed their task interests, emphasising the solution to the problems of their enterprises; and teachers stressed their task interests, but with emphasis on the educative orientation of the programme. In the evaluation of the DESEM programme, young entrepreneurs stressed their extramural and career interests, emphasising their interest in the programme as a means to support the development of their firms; and university coordinators stressed their task and career interests, emphasising their role within the programme.

In the evaluation of the CDS programme, the value of the symbolic use of evaluation was emphasised because it facilitated understanding of the problematic context of the programme. Here, Morgan's (1986) political metaphor of an organization was useful in understanding the different interests and the politics within each of the programmes evaluated. In this sense, the divergent interests of the stakeholders, plus their concerns with aspects of the process of the CDS programme, the structure, and the politics within it triggered conflicts between stakeholders. In particular, the evaluation helped to unveil political dynamics within the programme that emphasised a particular conflict (formal authority) between teachers and the programme manager. Similarly, in the evaluation of the DESEM programme, the symbolic use of evaluation also allowed the problematic context of the programme to be understood. In this sense, aspects of the structure of the programme created conflicts among stakeholders. In particular, the symbolic use of evaluation allowed identification of an interplay between DESEM's structure and political dynamics within the programme as another source of conflict which grouped young entrepreneurs and university coordinators against entrepreneurial advisors and programme managers.

In the evaluation of the DESEM programme, the usefulness of the instrumental use of evaluation was emphasised because the evaluation process followed sought the participation of the various stakeholders and the focus on their CC&I as a means to support decision-making. DESEM managers understood, from the evaluation, that the major source of conflict within the programme was the role of the entrepreneurial advisors as support for young entrepreneurs, because on the one hand, they were not sharing their experiences nor mentoring young entrepreneurs while on the other hand, young entrepreneurs expressed their need for support and advice. This enabled DESEM managers to understand better the needs of the stakeholders. As noted in the DESEM case study (see section 7.3.4.5), DESEM managers intended to abolish the entrepreneurial advisor role as a source of advice and expertise to young entrepreneurs, to provide young entrepreneurs with the support of a specialized advisor from DESEM and also to train university coordinators to provide more support to young entrepreneurs, as they had more direct contact with them. In the evaluation of the CDS programme, the researcher considers that the usefulness of the symbolic use of evaluation was emphasised to a lesser extent or was limited, because the CDS programme was part of a larger structure. In this sense, in the particular case of the evaluation of CDS, their

commitment to it and participation of the programme managers and stakeholders was not enough to transform recommendations into actions. In contrast, in the DESEM programme, despite it being offered at national level, each office was independent; which allowed DESEM managers to make more expeditious use of the evaluation. This suggests that, depending on the context of the programme and the conditions that surround its evaluation, certain uses might be emphasised. Therefore, in the light of the case studies developed in this chapter, it can be concluded that to promote the instrumental use of evaluation, it is not enough to have the commitment of programme managers or stakeholders to the evaluation, but it is also necessary to consider the structure within which the programme is being offered and the role the managers and stakeholders have when it comes to translating the results of the evaluation into actions.

To conclude this thesis, the following chapter presents reflections on the implications of the research undertaken. It offers a critical reflection on the SRPPE approach and its implications for answering the research questions.

Chapter 8. Discussion of findings

This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings. It presents the implications of this research project for the theory and practice of programme evaluation and for the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs in Mexico. It explicitly answers the research questions and highlights their value in the light of the findings of other authors.

As stated in section 1.4 the research questions addressed in this research project were:

1. Is the participatory approach to MSME programme evaluation, developed in this research, an appropriate way to consider intangible factors in programme evaluation?
2. Do the components of the evaluation approach help to address the programme stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues?
3. Does the participatory evaluation approach help to achieve conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation?
4. Was the methodology used in this research, appropriate to deal with the type of claims, concerns and issues programme stakeholders raised?

The chapter first discusses the findings related to research questions two, three and four, and then it considers research question one.

8.1 Discussing the components of the SRPPE approach

The aim of this section is to provide an answer to the second research question and to point out its implications in the light of the literature review.

The case studies presented in Chapter Seven helped to provide an answer to the second research question, which aimed to find out if the four components of the SRPPE approach helped to address the claims, concerns and issues of programme stakeholders.

Discussing the decision-making component

The decision-making component was described in Chapter Four as a three dimensional model that involved decisions the evaluator should consider in relation to the control over the evaluation process, the selection of stakeholders for participation in the evaluation and the depth of stakeholders' participation (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

Cousins and Earl (1995a) pointed out that a distinctive characteristic of participatory evaluations was that researcher and stakeholders worked in partnership; in this sense, the researcher brought technical skills to the evaluation process while stakeholders brought their knowledge about the content and context of the programmes being evaluated. This research supported this idea of a partnership between the researcher and the programme stakeholders by trying to find a balance between the control the researcher exercised because of her own interest in the research and the methodology used, and the control programme stakeholders needed to have that would make them feel that they were owners of the evaluation. In this sense, the role the researcher played in the two programmes evaluated, not as an expert who judged the programmes, but as a facilitator who sought the programmes improvement, helped to widen stakeholders' participation and the control of the evaluation. On the one hand, the evaluator controlled the evaluation because she introduced the evaluation approach that was used and the methodology that was followed. On the other hand, programme stakeholders controlled the evaluation because they defined the questions each evaluation addressed, thus reflecting their particular claims, concerns and issues (CC&I). In this sense, the way the sessions were structured (where the evaluation questions were defined using nominal group technique (NGT) and discussed using focus groups) allowed the control of the evaluation to be driven by CC&I of the programme stakeholders.

It was considered that by involving the different programme stakeholders in the evaluation of each programme, it was possible to share the control over the two evaluations and to provide a forum where the stakeholders' CC&I were identified and their different views were considered. The case studies presented in Chapter Seven, provided evidence that these ideas of involving stakeholders and programme managers in the evaluation and of their CC&I being the organizers of the evaluation, were useful in the context of the evaluation of Mexican programmes for MSMEs. In this sense, the involvement of the programme managers in each evaluation allowed them to have a

better understanding of the programmes, and allowed them to reflect on the issues programme stakeholders were raising.

The benefits of widening the spectrum of participation in the evaluation can be noted in the following examples of the evaluations of CDS and DESEM programmes.

In relation to the evaluation of the CDS programme, the decision-making component allowed the identification of a common view, among stakeholders, of the need to give formality to CDS procedures through a working schedule (see section 7.2.3.5). In this sense, sharing the control of the evaluation, encouraging different stakeholders to participate in the evaluation and encouraging a depth of participation by programme stakeholders allowed the identification of the needs stakeholders had for improving the coordination among all the participants of the CDS project.

In the case of the DESEM evaluation, for example, if the views of the university coordinators in relation to the specific issue of the procedures of the DESEM programme, had been the only ones considered; the programme managers would have thought that, in this area, there was nothing that needed to be improved. However, young entrepreneurs provided a different view and noted the problems they faced and suggested ways of improving this problem (see section 7.3.3.1).

Cousins and Earl (1992) and King (1995) also recognized that through a greater depth and range of participation, the utilization of the evaluation process and its findings are enhanced. This research found out that the contact between the evaluator and the programme stakeholders during the evaluation process could determine the depth of the involvement of the stakeholders in the evaluation, as well as the depth of reflection on the evaluation process. However, the depth of involvement of stakeholders in this research raised the questions of how, aiming at working in partnership, the researcher's interests can be reconciled with the stakeholders' interests. For example, the researcher considered the SRPPE approach used in this research to be participatory because programme stakeholders (the decision makers and the stakeholders benefited or affected by their involvement on the programme) were involved in the evaluation of each programme. The programme stakeholders were involved in the process of definition of the evaluation questions, in the process of discussion of the evaluation and in the

reflection on the evaluation process during the time of the fieldwork. However, after the fieldwork the stakeholders' involvement in the analysis of the evaluation process and in the preparation of the case studies was more passive. Despite the efforts made to maintain direct contact with the programme stakeholders, distant working did not allowed the last stage of the research to be fully participatory. Weiss's (1998a) comment that in participatory evaluation, evaluators are trying to involve programme stakeholders in the evaluators' job (doing evaluation) while programme stakeholders want evaluators to be involved in their job (improving the organization and its programmes) could be useful in thinking of ways in which the researchers' interests can be reconciled with the stakeholders' interests in order to enhance the evaluation process and its findings.

In this sense, although the research project is considered to be participatory because of the stakeholders' involvement, the researcher's particular interest in promoting the SRPPE approach (which made the evaluation process less participatory) and the particular agendas of the participants (programme stakeholders and the researcher) had a role to play in the evaluation. This highlights the need, not only to consider the depth and range of participation of stakeholders, but in addition, to reflect on the researcher's and stakeholders' agendas and interests in order to enhance the evaluation process and its findings.

As part of the process of evaluation, on the one hand, Greene (1997) argued that the evaluator must state the value commitments, assumptions and political stances that support a chosen methodology. Brisolara (1998) suggested that the evaluator should continuously reflect on her biases and influences on the process, and similarly Whitmore (1998) referred to the development of ways of mitigating the influence the evaluator has in the evaluation process. On the other hand, Patton (1987, 1997a) urged evaluators to be active, reactive and adaptive to focus the evaluation on questions that are of interest to stakeholders, to design a useful and practical evaluation and to adapt to the stakeholders' needs of information and to the changing conditions of the programme. These two apparently different positions were addressed as part of the situational characteristics of the SRPPE approach and the component of the characteristics of the evaluator. Clearly much more research is needed in order to accommodate these two seemingly different positions.

Discussing the political component

The political component of the SRPPE approach considered six factors which define the political environment and influence the use of evaluation (see section 4.3.4). These factors were:

1. The information needs of different stakeholders.
2. The decision characteristics and their context.
3. The political climate of the evaluation.
4. The competing information that stakeholders use or integrate into the results of the evaluation.
5. The personal characteristics of decision makers.
6. The user commitment and/or receptiveness of decision makers to the evaluation (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986).

Additionally to these six factors, the SRPPE approach also considered the interactions that took place in the evaluation process as part of the political component.

Cousins (1995) argued that "... clearly, participation in evaluation in and of itself provides no guarantees. We need to know much more about the organizational conditions that support the participatory model and to develop strategies to ensure that it fits the organizational context" (pp. 70-71). This research supports Cousins' idea of the need to know about the conditions and the context of the programmes that could support participatory evaluation approaches. In this sense, the consideration of the political component of the SRPPE approach helped to provide a better picture of the programmes and their context, to identify the CC&I of the different stakeholders, and to understand the different views stakeholders had and the conflicts created because of their different interests.

For example, in the evaluation of the two programmes it was thought that the evaluation process could benefited from having separate stakeholder focus groups. In the specific case of the CDS programme, a possible power-dependency relationship was identified (in the relationship between students and teachers). Some of the participant students were developing projects with some of the participant teachers and so it was important to assure a non-threatening atmosphere, and the confidentiality of participants' opinions

(Morgan, 1997). A similar rationale was applied in the case of the business owner-manager focus group, some of whose enterprises were hosting projects.

The political component of the SRPPE approach also allowed the identification of conflicts created between stakeholders because of their different interests. For example, in the evaluation of the CDS programme, the involvement of different programme stakeholders allowed the identification of CDS conflicting objectives. For students, the project was incomplete if it was not implemented. The researcher understood this to be a consequence of the high priority students gave to gaining experience, arising from their career interests. For owner-managers, the project was incomplete if it did not demonstrate economic benefits for the business, thus reflecting their task interests, oriented to solving business problems. Finally, for teachers the purpose of developing projects was not implementation but rather to make suggestions for improvement. The researcher understood this to be a consequence of their task interests which emphasised their academic orientation, and a reaction to the perceived CDS business orientation (see section 7.2.3.4).

In the DESEM evaluation, the political component allowed a better picture of the programme and its context, for example in the case of discussion of the role of the entrepreneurial advisor (see section 7.3.3.2). As noted in the DESEM case study, the intention of the entrepreneurial advisors' involvement in the programme was to support young entrepreneurs in their small firms by sharing their practical experience. However, the problems young entrepreneurs experienced with the entrepreneurial advisors' involvement led to major complaints about the programme. The difficulties identified in this interaction influenced the political climate of the DESEM programme because the involvement of entrepreneurial advisors in the programme was also intended to assist DESEM in its contact with governmental institutions that provide support to small enterprises, and DESEM managers had not been aware of the deficiencies in the support entrepreneurial advisors were giving to young entrepreneurs.

As previously noted, it was considered the SRPPE approach used in the evaluation of the two programmes to be participatory, because the involvement of programme stakeholders and the evaluation approach allowed the presentation of the different stakeholders' views and the consideration of the political climate of each programme.

At the same time, it was also considered the SRPPE approach used to be responsive, because the CC&I were the organizers of the evaluations. Moreover, the different stakeholders' interests were identified through the general issues of the programmes, and conflicts between stakeholders were identified.

Regarding the use of the evaluation results, Lafleur (1995) acknowledged that "the participatory nature of evaluation is very much limited by structures that are not always supportive of, nor in tune with, using the results of evaluation studies" (p. 52). This research found out that the context of decisions of the managers of each programme was a determining factor in the use of the evaluations. For example, the CDS programme manager was interested and willing to make changes and programme stakeholders noted the need for change in the programme. At the time of the CDS evaluation, participants noted the value and the importance of the information generated. However, the use of the evaluation was limited because the programme was part of a larger structure, showing that to promote the use of evaluation the commitment and participation of programme managers and programme stakeholders is not enough. The DESEM evaluation presented the opposite situation. Despite the DESEM programme being offered at a national level, each office was independent; this allowed a more expeditious use of the evaluation. For example, as noted in the DESEM case study, DESEM managers decided to abolish the entrepreneurial advisors' role as the young entrepreneurs' source of expertise and advice, because it was identified as one of the issues that generated conflicts within the programme. Thus, this research recognized the need to consider, in the use of programme evaluation, the structure in which the programme is being offered and the role the programme managers and programme stakeholders have when it comes to translating the results of the evaluation into action.

Discussing the learning component

Cousins and Earl (1992, 1995b) argue that participatory evaluation has the potential to promote organizational learning because it is considered to be a socially constructed knowledge that can encourage single and double loop learning. The two case studies presented in Chapter Seven, provided evidence that this capacity was fostered.

For example, the learning achieved in the evaluation of the CDS programme can be noted in the following paragraphs.

Teachers were involved in defining the CDS evaluation questions and were involved in answering those questions. As noted in the CDS case study, this process allowed them to reflect not only on the CDS programme but also about their own involvement and its impact (see section 7.2.3.2). In this respect, a teacher made the following comment:

Teacher 2 “I think that a better project is achieved when different participants are involved, and I do think that teachers’ involvement is important right from the definition of the project. If CDS arrange meetings with enterprises, to define projects, teachers should go and find out what the project is going to be about” (First teachers’ focus group, unit 171).

During the focus group, teachers raised the concern of the importance of reflecting about their involvement and supervision:

Teacher 2 “...CDS makes the contact with the enterprise and teachers are left alone to develop the project development; ... students are usually satisfied with the project ... but that does not mean that, as a team, we are doing things well” (First teachers’ focus group, units 231-232).

Teacher 1 “But the problem is that, in the University, we do not have time to reflect about what we did in each project... therefore, sometimes we make the same mistakes again and again, because we do not have time to sit down and see what went wrong in the projects, and we continue making the same mistakes” (First teachers’ focus group, units 235-236).

The SRPPE approach allowed participants to identify the different views held by the programme stakeholders. As part of the learning component, the SRPPE approach presented a portrait in which the different understandings of the programme were challenged and enhanced (see section 7.2.3.3). As noted by one of the teachers:

Teacher 1 “I have a question, does CDS have to exist as a separate department? I mean, can’t CDS be part of the academic departments?” (First teachers’ focus group, unit 210)

This question triggered a discussion, from which recommendations emerged. From the teachers’ point of view, the recommendations they made could solve most of the problems they identified in the CDS programme (see section 7.2.4).

In the case of the DESEM evaluation, DESEM managers had the opportunity to improve the programme by identifying the CC&I of the programme stakeholders and by better understanding the programme. For example, after the session where the questions of the evaluation were defined, and young entrepreneurs, university coordinators and the programme managers identified the weaknesses and strengths of the DESEM programme, the programme manager reflected in the following way:

DESEM manager “I see a lack of information about the programme. The objective of this evaluation is to fill those big black holes” (NGT session, unit 55).
“Obviously, there is a problem of lack of information and interaction from us. But how can we make the programme more attractive? How can we improve the programme?” (NGT session, units 67, 68).

The case studies developed in this research project showed signs of stakeholders' individual learning (single and double loop) and of the learning product of the interaction between stakeholders; which could promote organizational learning (Popper & Lipshitz, 2000).

In the evaluation of both programmes, the SRPPE approach provided a learning forum that allowed the CC&I of programme stakeholders to be identified and it promoted individual and group learning by involving the different stakeholders in the evaluation process. It gave stakeholders the opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge of the programmes; and gave them the opportunity to reflect about their role and their influence over the programme and over other participants. The learning forum the SRPPE approach offered facilitated programme stakeholders to deal with the emergent problems they faced (single loop learning): this was noted specifically with teachers sharing experiences and practices of the CDS programme and with university coordinators sharing experiences and practices of the DESEM programme. In addition, in the evaluation of the CDS programme, the SRPPE approach encouraged programme stakeholders to take a step further in their involvement in the evaluation by questioning the way things were done in the CDS programme and reflecting on the daily activities (double loop learning).

As noted in Chapter Four, Cousins and Earl (1992) highlighted as conditions for enhancing organizational learning that the organization values the evaluation; that it has a commitment to organizational learning as a way of improvement; that it provides the necessary time and resources to participants; that it provides training to participants in the evaluation; that it gives follow up to the evaluation process and that the organization motivates participants in the evaluation. In addition, Torres and Preskill (2001) recognized the importance of providing participants in the evaluation with time to reflect and to examine the underlying assumptions of daily activities. This research concurred with Torres and Preskill's (2001) idea that the evaluation process should allow stakeholders enough time to reflect on the programme and the problems faced, and the underlying assumptions of daily activities. In addition, as part of the conditions for organizational learning, this research recognized the need to have enough time to carry out the whole evaluation process. In this sense, in the CDS evaluation, double loop learning was achieved because the whole evaluation process allowed stakeholders more time to reflect, whereas the circumstances in which the DESEM evaluation was carried out made this process of reflection more superficial.

Discussing the evaluator's characteristics component

Alkin (1990) argued that the most important role of the evaluator is to assist in framing questions for the evaluation. The question that could be raised is whose questions? In this respect, Greene (1998) argued that what distinguishes different evaluation methodologies are not their methods, but whose questions and values are addressed and promoted. This research provided evidence that the characteristics of the evaluator cannot be isolated from the evaluation process because the evaluator played a decisive role in the evaluations. In this sense, the influence the evaluator had in facilitating the evaluation process can be noted in the influence she had in seeking the engagement of different programme stakeholders, in focusing the evaluations on the stakeholders' CC&I and in pursuing ways of improving the programmes.

For example, in the evaluation of the CDS programme, the researcher found it difficult to deal with the issue of CDS involvement in the project development. CDS stakeholders knew that the evaluation intended to seek ways to improve the programme, not to judge it; therefore, the researcher took care to refer to the programme as a whole and avoided making reference to the CDS manager (see section 7.2.3.3).

As noted in Chapter Five (see section 5.4.1) Krueger (1998) recommended in analysing focus groups, to be on the look-out for what is not being said. In the business owner-managers' focus group to evaluate the CDS programme, while owner-managers praised CDS experience in developing projects as a strength, there was no reference to the issue of developing projects in large enterprises. This was because all of the participating owner-managers had MSMEs. The researcher considered it was not her role to raise this topic in the discussion with owner-managers. This decision was informed by the initial personal interviews held with teachers that were involved in the CDS programme.

In the evaluation of the DESEM programme, the influence the evaluator had on the process, in seeking the stakeholders' engagement, in focusing the evaluation on the stakeholders' CC&I, and the improvement of the programme can be noted. Previously in the discussion of the learning component, it was noted that the DESEM manager raised the questions of how to make the DESEM programme more attractive and how to improve the programme. To this, the researcher responded:

The researcher “Maybe these questions of how we can make the DESEM programme really attractive to participants, how we can improve the communication process and the DESEM programme are questions that they (young entrepreneurs) can help to answer” (NGT session, unit 69).

In this sense, it can be seen that the characteristics of the evaluator and the decisions she made were interwoven with the evaluation approach adopted. For example, the researcher intended the SRPPE approach to be responsive to the stakeholders, and therefore stakeholders' CC&I were made the input of the evaluation, were addressed in the evaluation process, and were reflected in the outcomes of the evaluations (see Figure 4.1). In addition, the SRPPE approach was considered to be situational because of the active-reactive-adaptive stances taken in both programme evaluations. Without this characteristic, it is doubtful whether either evaluation could have been carried out. Additionally, the research design adopted allowed the researcher to reflect on the decisions that were taken; the influence she had in the evaluation process, and on how to mitigate and acknowledge her influence on the overall evaluation approach. Finally, the SRPPE approach was intended to be practical, and so decisions were made in order

to focus the evaluation on providing useful information for programme improvement and decision making.

In summary, the above discussions showed that the four components of the SRPPE approach helped to address the claims, concerns and issues of programme stakeholders.

- The decision making component helped the researcher to share the control over the evaluation with programme stakeholders. In this sense, stakeholders controlled the evaluation because they defined the questions each evaluation addressed, thus reflecting their particular CC&I.
- The political component helped to provide a better picture of the programmes and their context, to identify the CC&I of the different stakeholders, to understand the different views stakeholders had and the conflicts created because of their different interests.
- The learning component provided a learning forum that allowed identifying the CC&I of programme stakeholders and it promoted individual and group learning by involving the different stakeholders in the evaluation process.
- The characteristics of the evaluator's component enabled identification of the influence the evaluator had in seeking the engagement of different programme stakeholders, in focusing the evaluations on the stakeholders' CC&I and in pursuing ways of improving the programmes.

Taking into account the particular interest of this research, the following discussion focuses on the implications for the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs of the previous discussions of the components of the SRPPE approach.

Implications for evaluations of programmes for MSMEs in Mexico

Chapter Three pointed out that in Mexico programmes for MSMEs are heavily oriented towards providing services such as information, consultancy, counselling, and training (OECD, 2000). In relation to programmes for MSMEs, only some have been evaluated and although the Secretariat of Economy recognized the need to evaluate and improve the existing programmes for MSMEs, the evaluation approach suggested focuses on establishing mechanisms which only consider the outcomes of the evaluation in order to assign resources more effectively (Secretaría de Economía, 2000d). The irony is that

although the majority of the Mexican programmes for MSMEs are focused towards the provision of services, the evaluation approach suggested overemphasises indicators and measuring factors that focus only on the outcomes of the evaluation.

As indicated in the literature review of this thesis, this is where the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs faces methodological problems. For example, there are difficulties in conducting evaluations in the absence of clear objectives (Storey, 1998); conflicts of choosing evaluation criteria when programmes have multiple objectives (OECD, 1999); difficulties of expressing objectives in quantifiable measures (Lundström & Stevenson, 2001); and the possible misinterpretation of outcomes because they fail to acknowledge the process of evaluation (Stame, 1999).

In an original way, the process followed in the evaluation of the two Mexican programmes for MSMEs sought to deal with these problems by considering intangible factors (the stakeholders' claims, concerns, and issues) and by considering the process of evaluation. This research considered that the different people involved in a MSME development programme (stakeholders) know better the programme, its strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, due to their different experiences of the benefits and problems faced as a result of the programme, they can give recommendations that could help to solve the programme problems, improve it and maintain its relevance to programme stakeholders. Thus, the research promoted the stakeholders' capacity to understand the programme and sought to improve the programme by understanding it through the eyes of its stakeholders (Bryman, 1988).

8.2 Discussing the uses of the evaluation

The aim of this section is to provide an answer to the third research question and to discuss the answer in the light of the literature review.

Chapter Seven helped to provide an answer to research question three, which aimed to explore whether the SRPPE approach, developed in this research, helped to achieve conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation. Chapter Four pointed out that conceptual use refers to the use of the evaluation that contributes to educative and

learning activities. Symbolic use refers to the use of evaluation results in the political arena of the programme. Instrumental use aims to support decision making and programme improvement (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991; Weiss, 1986).

Discussing conceptual use

Chapter Seven concluded that, in the light of the evaluations carried out in the fieldwork of this research and the case studies developed, the SRPPE approach promoted the conceptual use of evaluation because it encouraged a better understanding of the programme and its stakeholders by identifying the stakeholders' CC&I and by identifying their different interests. In addition, it concluded that the SRPPE approach promoted individual learning and supported stakeholders' questioning the values and beliefs of the programme (double loop learning). For example, in the CDS evaluation, teachers questioned the basic assumptions of the programme by questioning who was part of the programme, who was not and who was developing the CDS projects. In the DESEM evaluation, young entrepreneurs and university coordinators questioned the role of university advisors; also, university coordinators questioned the role they were playing within the programme. This confirms the view of Papineau and Kiely (1996) who argued that the participatory evaluation they used to evaluate a community economic development organization contributed to the conceptual use of the evaluation through "a deeper process of reflection about the mission and objectives of the organization" (p. 91).

Shadish, Cook and Leviton (1991) noted various activities that aid in the conceptual use of evaluation, such as identifying users of the evaluation in early stages of the evaluation process, having frequent contacts with them, studying things they can control, providing interim results, translating findings into actions and disseminating the results of the evaluation. This research also considers that the case studies presented in Chapter Seven contributed to the conceptual use of evaluation by documenting the evaluation process, by giving the opportunity to reflect on the evaluation and by providing a vicarious experience of the programme evaluations.

Discussing symbolic use

The symbolic use of evaluation considers the use given to the evaluation in the persuasive or political arena of the programme, where decisions are reaffirmed or are discussed further in relation to a particular agenda (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). Papineau and Kiely (1996) pointed out, in their evaluation, that participant stakeholders tended to make symbolic use of the evaluation results to leverage funding for the organization, to serve as a model for other organizations and to persuade individuals of the need for technical assistance. In the two programmes evaluated in this research, it was found out that the symbolic use stakeholders gave to the evaluation was not intended for acquiring funds or being a model for other programmes, but as a means of legitimating the changes the programmes needed. For example, the CDS manager mentioned:

“For me this is very relevant (the intervention carried out). In fact, the conclusions that have been generated after the sessions, ...for me, are very valuable in order to suggests ways of improving and to improve the programme” (Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, unit 60).

Similarly, DESEM managers used the outputs of the evaluation to present to the programme council the need for young entrepreneurs to be supported by training university coordinators and by a specialized advisor from DESEM, instead of using the entrepreneurial advisor.

The symbolic use of evaluation of the SRPPE approach also served to identify the different interests of stakeholders; to identify aspects of the programmes that triggered disagreements between stakeholders, and to acknowledge conflicts within the programmes due to political dynamics and relationships of dependencies. Due to the different interests of stakeholders, this research confirmed the idea that it is difficult to achieve consensus among stakeholders (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), especially as the focus of the research was on knowing the CC&I of the programme stakeholders and understanding their different interests.

As an original aspect of this research project, the case studies portrayed some general issues of the programmes evaluated, which reflected the differences of opinions between the different stakeholders involved. Awareness of these general issues made it

possible to propose, for consideration, topics for negotiation between the programme stakeholders that might improve the programmes. This concurs with Guba and Lincoln's (1989) idea of putting forward an agenda of negotiation of unresolved issues between stakeholders.

Discussing instrumental use

Huberman (1995) argued that the most important thing in evaluation is the collaboration established in the process. The researcher considered that this collaboration provided the basis for decision making (Alkin, 1991) rather than for the decisions which are taken. The case studies presented in Chapter Seven provided indications that the evaluation of the two programmes aided in the decision making process. Most notably, in the evaluation of the DESEM programme the collaboration of young entrepreneurs, university coordinators and programme managers enabled identification of the need for changing the mentoring role of entrepreneurial advisors. In the case of the CDS evaluation, the collaboration of students, business owner-managers, teachers and the programme manager supported the decisions made in relation to the improvement of the processes followed in the CDS programme. However, the concerns with the structure of the programme were left aside because the programme was part of a larger structure. In the CDS evaluation, the usefulness of the symbolical use of evaluation was emphasised to a lesser extent and, in this case, the commitment to the evaluation and participation of the programme manager and programme stakeholders was not enough to transform some recommendations into actions. This emphasises the need to consider the structure in which the programme is being offered and the role programme managers and programme stakeholders have when it comes to translating the results of the evaluation into action.

As argued by Alkin (1991) this research also recognized that programme stakeholders may suggest recommendations for programme improvement which are informed by their own experiences; however, this does not mean that the recommendations will be put in practice. As previously noted, this research stressed the importance of considering the process of evaluation and concurs with Cousins and Earl's (1995b) view of the impact of evaluation. They noted that the final proof of impact of the evaluation should not be "whether recommendations were implemented, whether action plans were followed, or whether otherwise rational observable consequences were apparent... such

consequences by their very nature, if in evidence, do give cause for celebration” (p. 160). Thus, this research concluded that depending on the context of the programme and the conditions that surround each evaluation, different uses might be emphasised.

In summary, the above discussions showed that the SRPPE approach, developed in this research, helped to achieve conceptual, symbolic, and instrumental uses of evaluation.

- The conceptual use of evaluation was achieved by encouraging a better understanding of the programmes and the CC&I of the stakeholders; by encouraging single and double loop learning and by documenting the process of evaluation of each of the programmes.
- The symbolic use of evaluation was achieved by identifying the different views and interests of the programme stakeholders; by examining the conditions that surround each general issue, aiding in understanding their complexity; by using the evaluations as a means of legitimating the changes the programmes needed; and by putting forward topics for an agenda of negotiation between programme stakeholders.
- The instrumental use of evaluation was achieved by encouraging programme stakeholders to identify those things that, in their view, needed to be improved and by encouraging stakeholders to suggest how to improve them.

Implications for evaluations of programmes for MSMEs

Taking into account the particular interest of this research in programmes for MSMEs, this section focuses on the implications the discussion above has for the evaluation of programmes of MSMEs.

As pointed out in Chapter Two, a common approach to evaluate policies to support small firms is the documentation of the expenses incurred, without considering whether the money was effectively spent (Storey, 1998). As argued by Gibb (1990a), the expenditure of public funds demands accountability, which cannot depend on narrow and simplistic approaches that focus on quantifying short-term benefits. Considering Gibb’s idea, the approach of this study could be of value for the evaluation of existing programmes for MSMEs in Mexico, since the Secretariat of Economy suggested the establishment of mechanisms, which consider the outcomes of the evaluation in order to

assign resources more effectively (Secretaría de Economía, 2000d). The problem that emerges from the recommendation of the Secretariat of Economy is that the evaluation approach suggested does not consider the process of evaluation, and so it would not deal appropriately with participants' involvement. It also fails to consider the heterogeneity of the MSME sector (Devins, 1999) and the complexity that surrounds the small firms (for example, the political environment and the attitudes of the business owner-manager) (Gibb, 1990a).

It could be added that in the two programmes evaluated in this research project, the conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation contributed to widen the view of the outcomes of an evaluation and to recognize the importance of considering the process of evaluation. Before the research project, both programmes considered only measurable indicators in their evaluations, during the process and at the end of the evaluations in this research, it was clear for programme managers and stakeholders that the use of intangible factors in the evaluations facilitated understanding of the programmes, knowing the stakeholders' needs and providing a guide to ways of improving the programmes. In this sense, Chapter Seven provided evidence of the usefulness of the conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of the evaluation for the two programmes for MSMEs. This reinforced the idea that, in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs, it is important to consider the process of evaluation and the people who are the programme's target (Stame, 1999).

As noted in Chapter Two, Devins and Gold (2002, p.116) recognized the need "... to move away from an approach based on positivist, largely economic principles" towards an approach which considers the principles of Fourth Generation Evaluation. Some of these principles, which the researcher considered have implications for the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs, are the following:

- Evaluation is a process where evaluators and stakeholders jointly and collaboratively create a construction of the programme evaluated (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In the context of the two programmes evaluated in this research, the idea of a joint collaborative construction was useful at the beginning of the evaluation process, where the questions for the evaluations were defined and discussed. However, limitations of follow-up after the fieldwork did not allow the last stage of the research (preparation of the case studies) to be fully

collaborative. This suggests the need to consider the researcher's and the stakeholders' interests and agendas in the process of evaluation of programmes for MSMEs.

- Evaluation is a local process that depends on the local context and its stakeholders (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This research fully concurred with this idea, and in doing so, it was considered appropriate to provide a thick description of the conditions and the context that surrounded each of the evaluations (see Chapter Six). In addition, the project sought to understand the stakeholders by identifying the conditions, actions, and consequences of their involvement in the programmes that informed their particular CC&I. This reinforced Di Tommaso and Dubbini's (2000) idea of the importance of considering the human elements and the environmental characteristics that surround the firm in the analysis of any small firm policy intervention.
- Evaluation is a teaching/learning process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This research provided indications of how evaluation was indeed a teaching/learning process between the programme stakeholders. In this sense, as previously noted, it was considered that the SRPPE approach provided participants of the evaluations with an opportunity to reflect on their roles and influence and that of other participants. It also provided a learning forum where the combination of information each participant had contributed to identify their different CC&I, to better understand the programme and the different views programme stakeholders had, and to seek ways of improving each programme. In this way it addressed, at the programme level, the deficiency of a learning element Lundström and Stevenson (2001) identified in SME policy evaluation, so that the people involved in the programme did learn about the process of evaluation.

8.3 Discussing this research methodology

The aim of this section is to provide an answer to the fourth research question and to discuss the answer in the light of the literature review.

Chapter Six and Chapter Seven helped to provide an answer to the fourth research question related to whether the methodology used in the SRPPE approach was

appropriate or not to deal with the claims, concerns, and issues of the programme stakeholders. A constructivist and interpretivist methodology was chosen to evaluate programmes for MSMEs because it gave importance to the perceptions of programme stakeholders about their claims, concerns, and issues. This research methodology made it possible to focus on the stakeholders' multiple interrelated realities, on the interactive process between the researcher and the participants of the research, and on the complexity of the programmes from the point of view of the stakeholders (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1989; Schwandt, 1990).

In order to inquire about the claims, concerns and issues of the programme stakeholder, the research design relied on the nominal group technique (NGT) to define the questions for the evaluations. Then, focus groups were used in order to discuss the questions of the evaluations. In the light of this research intervention, it was possible to conclude that NGT was an appropriate method to use because it enabled the definition of questions for the evaluation of the programmes which reflected the claims, concerns and issues of the participants. This allowed the evaluation to be relevant for the participants. In this way the project met the criterion put forward by Cousins and Whitmore (1998) who argued that a central premise of the participatory evaluation approach is that the participation of stakeholders should enhance relevance, ownership and the utilization of the evaluation. It also agreed with Carney, McIntosh and Worth (1996) who noted that the NGT could be useful in complex studies because it facilitates understanding of the context in which practitioners work and ensures that the study is acceptable and relevant to their practice.

Nominal Group Technique

An original contribution of the use of the NGT to generate questions for the evaluation of programmes is that it allowed a direct interaction between programme stakeholders, while minimising conflicts. This original contribution overcomes the criticism of Fourth Generation Evaluation. Guba and Lincoln's (1989) hermeneutic dialectic cycle while arguing for a joint construction between the researcher and stakeholders to make sense of and better understand the interaction in which they are engaged, failed to make reference to a direct interaction between different stakeholders until the stage of negotiation of conflictive claims, concerns and issue. This research project showed that an early interaction between programme stakeholders in the process of evaluation

allowed them to reflect on the stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues, and to understand the programme deeply from the point of view of other stakeholders; and it also allowed the evaluation agenda to be set by the own programme stakeholders.

Focus groups

Following the criticism of Fourth Generation Evaluation for failing to make reference to direct interaction between stakeholders, and the interest in this research in seeking the direct interaction between programme stakeholders, this research used focus groups in order to answer the questions stakeholders proposed for the evaluation. The two evaluations showed that it was not possible to achieve equality of position (power) among the different stakeholders during the evaluation as argued by Guba and Lincoln (1989) because of relationships of dependency between stakeholders. Therefore, an important point that emerged from the use of focus groups in this research intervention was that separating programme stakeholders into different focus groups allowed discussion while avoiding direct confrontations. In this way, participants were not inhibited by their participation, as suggested by Carney, McIntosh and Worth (1996) and Chapple and Murphy (1996). Therefore, this research intervention showed that focus groups were appropriate group structures to inquire about the claims, concerns and issues of programme stakeholders. However, it was also noted that in order to make the discussions productive, the number of participants involved in each group is important. This reinforced Morgan's (1998) argument that group discussions are a means of exploring peoples' beliefs and generating data; therefore, groups should involve between six to ten participants to ensure that relevant information emerges.

In summary,

- NGT was an appropriate method to use because it enabled direct interaction between stakeholders in the definition of questions for the evaluation of the programmes, which reflected the CC&I of the participants while minimising conflicts between them.
- Making separate focus groups between groups of stakeholders was appropriate to inquiry into the CC&I of programme stakeholders because they allowed direct interactions in the group discussions and avoided confrontations between groups of stakeholders. However, care should be taken in the number of

participants involved in the discussions in order to ensure a good group dynamic.

Implications for evaluations of programmes for MSMEs

Considering the contributions of the methodology used in this research, this section focuses on the implications of these findings for the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs.

As pointed out in Chapters Two and Three, the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs in Mexico, if done at all, is confined to the first, the second and the third generations of evaluation, by a reliance on measures, descriptions and judgments of external evaluators on the basis of tangible factors. This could lead to an ineffective assignment of resources because the process of evaluation is neglected. This research recognized as a failure the way in which programmes for MSMEs have been evaluated with an over emphasis on the scientific paradigm, a downgrading of the relevance of intangible factors, and the importance of stakeholders' participation in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs. Current evaluations also fail to consider the heterogeneity of MSMEs and of entrepreneurs (Curran & Blackburn, 2001; Devins, 1999; European Commission, 2001; OECD, 2000). In order to overcome these weaknesses, this research showed that a constructivist and interpretivist methodology can be of value since it placed importance on stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues (intangible factors), and the process of evaluation. Thus, this research introduced into the evaluation of Mexican programmes for MSMEs, the value of features such as: focus upon multiple interrelated realities (Schwandt, 1990); an interactive process between the researcher and the participants of the research (Guba, 1990); and an understanding of the complexity of the programmes from the point of view of those who live them (Schwandt, 1994). This supports Devins and Gold (2002) who argued for a social constructionist view to support small business managers and their organizations and orienting publicly funded programmes less towards the interests of providers, and more towards the interests of SMEs managers. In this sense, Devins (1999) supported "a shift away from an orientation based on the provision of off-the-shelf programmes towards a customer-led approach with a clear focus on meeting business needs" (p. 93). Furthermore, this research argued that the evaluation of the programmes should not be limited only to the perceptions of MSMEs managers; but that the involvement of other programme

stakeholders involved and affected by the programme should be considered. CDS manager made a very clear statement of the relevance of the methodology used in this research project:

CDS manager “But, you know what? Now I think that an evaluation is more than filling a questionnaire. An evaluation, with the work you have been doing, it is clear to me that... besides improving the programme, it is a forum for programme stakeholders, to provide reflections and recommendations in a participative way.
And more than the quantitative side (of the evaluation) is the qualitative side: to know how participants feel, if I am the only one that knows all the information, why am I and the people participating? What benefits do we see in the programme? It is needed to justify the existence of the programme. I think that the programme should not be something that is imposed and I have to fulfil, but that I see some advantages, I see some benefits and they are shared with other programme stakeholders (Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, units, 56, 57).

As far as this researcher can discover the NGT has not yet been used to generate questions for evaluation within small business research in general, nor within the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs in particular. Also as noted in Chapter Five, focus groups have been less frequently used in small business research (Curran & Blackburn, 2001; Blackburn & Stokes, 2000). As noted by Curran and Blackburn (2001) the focus groups used in this research highlighted the importance of group interactions and provided a way to understand the world of small business managers and of the stakeholders of programmes for MSMEs, thus adding to the originality of this research.

8.4 Discussing the consideration of intangible factors in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs

The aim of this section is to provide an answer to the first research question and to discuss this answer in the light of the literature review.

Chapter Seven helped to provide an answer to the first research question related to appropriateness of the SRPPE approach in considering intangible factors in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs. In a sense, the previous discussions provided a

guide to the implications of considering intangible factors in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs by considering the components of the SRPPE, the uses of evaluation and the appropriateness of the methodology used in this research project.

In addition, based on the evaluations carried out in this research project, the SRPPE approach considered intangible factors in the evaluation of two programmes for MSMEs in the following ways:

- The SRPPE approach put intangible factors in the centre of the evaluation by considering the CC&I of programme stakeholders as the inputs of the evaluation of the programmes, by addressing them in the process of the evaluations and by reflecting them in the outcomes of the evaluations. This complied with Stame's (1999) argument for considering intangible factors in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs, by focusing on the perceptions of the people involved and affected by the programme. As previously noted, the evaluation procedure used prior to this research by both programmes considered quantifiable tangible aspects (e.g. number of students and teachers involved in the CDS programme, number of young entrepreneurs involved in the DESEM programme). However, as demonstrated in the case studies developed in this research, these numbers and indices did not reveal valuable aspects of the programmes such as stakeholders' interests, and the conditions and the complexity of conflicts created within the programmes, nor did they provide any guide to ways in which the programmes could be improved.
- Di Tommaso and Dubbini (2000) argued for the importance of studying SMEs through a systemic vision, which considered the complexity of interactions and power issues between individuals. This research reinforced this idea, in the sense that it used Morgan's (1986) political metaphor of the organization to identify and understand the different interests stakeholders had and some of the conflicts that existed because of political dynamics within the programmes. In addition, the SRPPE approach used in this research provided a holistic view which considered some factors that affected programme stakeholders. In doing so, it was considered that the SRPPE approach went further to Stame's (1999) consideration of intangible in the evaluation of programmes for SMEs factors, which focused on the relationship between the implementing agency and the

beneficiary in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs. In this sense, in the process of evaluation, the SRPPE approach considered decisions of who to involve; the depth of involvement; the control of the evaluator and the stakeholders over the evaluation; the political context of the programme; the learning element in the evaluation and the influence of the characteristics of the evaluator.

The way in which intangible factors were considered in the two programmes evaluated, allowed the researcher to conclude that the SRPPE approach provided a better picture of the programmes: it allowed a better understanding of the stakeholders and their needs. It also allowed identification of the different interests stakeholders had and of conflicts that existed within the programmes, and provided a guide to the ways in which programmes could be improved.

In addition, the evaluation approach used in this research project provided evidence to counter Weiss's (1987) arguments about the limitations of qualitative evaluation approaches. As noted in Chapter Two, Weiss argued that "without hard data, it was often difficult to convince potential users that the results represented more than opinions of a sensitive and usually sympathetic observer" (1987, p. 43). The two case studies showed that the involvement and interaction of the various stakeholders in the process of evaluation allowed the programme managers to acknowledge and to reflect on the stakeholders' CC&I; and to understand the programmes from the point of view of other stakeholders, up to a point in which they recognized the need for a change in the paradigm of evaluation of the programmes.

For example, the CDS manager made the following comments about the evaluation (see section 6.2.1.3.4):

- (Talking about the evaluation format previously used) ... an evaluation is more than filling a questionnaire. It is clear to me that an evaluation, with the work you have been doing ... besides improving the programme, is a forum for programme stakeholders, to provide reflections and recommendations, in a participative way.
- And more than the quantitative side (of the evaluation) is the qualitative side: to know the (peoples' perception) about the programme (Personal interview, date 20-05-2002, units 56 and 57).

The DESEM manager concluded about the evaluation (Personal interview, date 24-05-2002):

- We arrived at the conclusion that we have to eliminate the entrepreneurial advisor role as a source of advice to young entrepreneurs. That role will be changed for a specialist advisor on the areas the programme emphasises (unit 32).
- The whole evaluation has been useful to us in learning what we can do to improve the programme, and we are conscious that we need to eliminate the entrepreneurial advisor role (unit 56).
- The evaluation has been useful in making us stop and reflect on what we have been doing. If it had not been for the evaluation, we would continue thinking that the programme was all right, and the process followed was appropriate. But now, we realise the need to know and understand the needs of the programme participants (unit 113).

With these comments, it is hard to see how qualitative information of the evaluation could be regarded as 'opinions of sensitive and sympathetic observers'. In fact, as implied by CDS and DESEM managers' comments, the evaluation process helped to unveil the perceptions of the people involved and affected by the programme, not the perceptions of someone detached from the programme; thus providing evidence of the potential of the SRPPE approach.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented explicit answers to the research questions of this research project. This chapter drew on the findings from the two case studies developed in Chapter Seven, and discussed them in the light of the findings of other authors. In doing so, it presented the implications of this research project, in general, for the theory and practice of programme evaluation and, in particular, for the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs in Mexico. This chapter recognized how the four components of the SRPPE approach helped to address the stakeholders' CC&I, through sharing the control of the evaluation with programme stakeholders; providing a better picture of the context of the programmes, understanding the stakeholders' different interests and the conflicts within the programmes; enabling a learning forum which promoted individual and group learning and acknowledging the influence the evaluator had. It also pointed out how conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of evaluation were fostered through the SRPPE approach and recognized that depending on the context of the programmes and the conditions that surround their evaluations, certain uses might be emphasised. This

chapter acknowledged that the NGT and focus group interviews were appropriate to deal with the CC&I of stakeholders as they promoted interactions between stakeholders while avoided confrontations between groups of stakeholders. The previous information allowed the researcher to conclude that the SRPPE approach was an appropriate way to consider intangible factors in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs. This is because it provided a context where intangible factors of programme stakeholders were considered and addressed them not only as part of the problems of the programmes, but also, as part of the solution to those problems. Such an approach had previously not been considered in the evaluation of these programmes.

The main lesson learned from the development and operationalisation of the SRPPE approach was:

- An evaluation approach that considered intangible factors (stakeholders' CC&I) facilitated better understanding of the programmes, revealed the different views stakeholders had, unveiled conflicts because of the different stakeholders' interests and provided a guide towards programme improvement.

This main lesson guided policy implications for the development of programmes for MSMEs in Mexico. In this sense, this research suggests that it could be appropriate for the Mexican Government to consider redirecting its SME's policy from business orientation towards entrepreneur orientation; with the intention of drawing attention towards considering an entrepreneurship policy in Mexico, which considers the formulation of policies and programmes centred on the needs of owner-managers. Finally, this research also suggests redefining the approach used to evaluate programmes for MSMEs in Mexico by advocating the inclusion of intangible factors, as well as the participation of stakeholders in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs.

The following chapter concludes the thesis by presenting a summary of the achievements of this research, the importance of the findings and their limitations, and by offering suggestions for further research.

Chapter 9. Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter starts by presenting a summary of the findings of the overall research project. It highlights the importance of those findings, in general, for the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs and in particular, for the two programmes evaluated in this research. It then examines the possible weaknesses of each intervention and presents the research limitations. Finally, this last chapter proposes an agenda for future research in the participatory evaluation of programmes for MSMEs.

9.2 Summary of findings

Addressing intangible factors as means to better understanding of the programme and the stakeholders

- The consideration of intangible factors in the SRPPE approach provided a better picture of the two programmes evaluated, by allowing a better understanding of the stakeholders and their needs. It also allowed the identification of the different interests of stakeholders and the conflicts that existed within the programmes and provided a guide to the ways in which programmes could be improved.
- This research project showed that involving and interacting with the various stakeholders in the process of evaluation allowed the programme managers to acknowledge and to reflect on the stakeholders' CC&I. It allowed them to understand the programmes from the point of view of other stakeholders, up to a point at which they recognized the need for a change in the paradigm of evaluation of the programmes.

Claims, concerns and issues central to the SRPPE approach

- The decision-making component helped to share control over the evaluations with the stakeholders. In this sense, stakeholders controlled the evaluations because the questions they defined for the evaluations reflected their particular

CC&I. This research pointed out the need, not only to consider the depth and range of participation of stakeholders, but also to reflect on the researcher's and stakeholders' agendas and interests in order to enhance the process of the evaluation and its findings.

- The political component helped to provide a better picture of the programmes and their context, to identify the CC&I of the different stakeholders, to understand the different views of stakeholders and the conflicts created because of their different interests. This research found out that the context of programme managers' decisions was determinant for the use of the evaluations, recognizing that there is a need to consider the structure in which the programme is offered.
- The learning component provided a learning forum that allowed the CC&I of programme stakeholders to be identified and promoted individual and group learning by involving the different stakeholders in the evaluation process. In addition to the conditions for organizational learning suggested by Cousins and Earl (1992) and Torres and Preskill (2001), this research recognized the need to have enough time to carry out the whole evaluation process.
- The characteristics of the evaluator component allowed the identification of the influence the evaluator had in seeking the engagement of different programme stakeholders, in focusing the evaluations in the stakeholders' CC&I and in pursuing ways of improving the programmes. It recognized that much research is needed in order to accommodate the seemingly different positions between the researcher's and the stakeholders' interests.

Uses of evaluation in support of decision-making

- The SRPPE approach promoted the conceptual use of evaluation because it encouraged a better understanding of the programme and its stakeholders by identifying the stakeholders' CC&I and by identifying their different interests. In this sense, the SRPPE approach fostered individual learning and stakeholders' questioning values and beliefs of the programme (double loop learning). Apart from the activities that aid in the conceptual use of evaluation identified by Shadish, Cook and Leviton (1991), this research considered that case studies contributed to the conceptual use of evaluation by documenting the evaluation

process, by providing an opportunity to reflect on the evaluation and by providing a vicarious experience of the programme evaluations.

- The SRPPE approach promoted the symbolic use of evaluation by identifying the different interests of stakeholders, and the aspects of the programmes that triggered disagreements between stakeholders. This approach also acknowledged conflicts within the programmes due to political dynamics and dependency relationships. This research found out that the symbolic use stakeholders gave to the evaluation was intended as a means of legitimating the changes the programmes needed. It confirmed that, because of the different interests of stakeholders, it was difficult to achieve consensus among stakeholders. Thus it used the case studies as a means of proposing topics for an agenda of negotiation between the programme stakeholders of issues which need to be considered in order to improve the programmes.
- The SRPPE approach promoted instrumental use of evaluation by providing the basis for decision-making through the stakeholders' collaboration in the evaluation process. This research found out that depending on the decision-making structure of the programmes, sometimes the commitment to the evaluation and participation of programme managers and programme stakeholders was not enough to transform recommendations into actions. This highlighted the need to consider the structure in which the programme was being offered and the role of programme managers and programme stakeholders when it came to translating the results of the evaluation into actions.

Inquiring about CC&I through direct interaction between stakeholders while avoiding confrontations

- The nominal group technique (NGT) was an appropriate method to use in inquiring about the CC&I because it enabled the stakeholders' CC&I to be reflected in the questions stakeholders defined for the evaluation of the programmes. This research concluded that the NGT allowed an early direct interaction between programme stakeholders in the process of evaluation while minimising conflicts and allowed the evaluation agenda to be set by the programme stakeholders.

- Focus groups were appropriate group structures to inquire about the CC&I of programme stakeholders because they allowed direct interaction between stakeholders in order to answer the questions they proposed for the evaluations. This research showed that because of relationships of dependency between stakeholders it was not possible to achieve equality of position (power) among the different stakeholders during the evaluation process. Thus, an important point that emerged was that separating programme stakeholders into different focus groups allowed discussion while avoiding direct confrontations and inhibition of participants. In addition, this research noted the importance of the number of participants involved in each group discussion in order to make the discussions productive.

9.3 Importance of the research findings

Importance of the research findings for the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs in Mexico

- This research pointed out that although the majority of the Mexican programmes for MSMEs are focused towards the provision of services, their approach to evaluation overemphasised indicators and measuring factors that focused only on the outcomes of the evaluation. Thus there were methodological problems, such as the difficulty of conducting evaluations in the absence of clear objectives (Storey, 1998); conflicts of choosing evaluation criteria when programmes have multiple objectives (OECD, 1999); difficulties of expressing objectives in quantifiable measures (Lundström & Stevenson, 2001); and the possible misinterpretation of outcomes because of a failure to acknowledge the process of evaluation (Stame, 1999).
- As argued by Gibb (1990a), this research recognized that the expenditure of public funds demands accountability, which cannot depend on narrow and simplistic approaches that focus on quantifying short-term benefits. This research recognized as a problem, the approach to evaluation of programmes for MSMEs suggested by the Secretariat of Economy, in that it does not consider the process of evaluation. Therefore, it does not deal appropriately with participants' involvement; and it fails to consider the heterogeneity of the

MSME sector (Devins, 1999) and the complexity that surrounds the small firms (e.g. political environment and the attitudes of the business owner-manager) (Gibb, 1990a).

- This research reinforced the idea that, in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs, it is important to consider the process of evaluation and the people who are the programme's target (Stame, 1999).
- It showed that a constructivist and interpretivist methodology could be of value by placing importance on stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues (intangible factors) and on the process of evaluation.
- It introduced into the evaluation of Mexican programmes for MSMEs the value of features such as: focus on multiple interrelated realities (Schwandt, 1990); an interactive process between the researcher and the participants of the research (Guba, 1990); and an understanding of the complexity of the programme from the point of view of those who are engaged with it (Schwandt, 1994).
- This research argued that the evaluation of the programmes should not be limited only to the perceptions of MSMEs managers; but should consider the involvement of other programme stakeholders involved and affected by the programmes.
- The use of the NGT and focus groups in this research highlighted the importance of stakeholders' interactions and the minimization of confrontations in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs. These techniques provided a way to understand the world of small business managers and of the stakeholders of programmes for MSMEs, thus adding to the originality of this research.
- It considered that evaluations that focus only on tangible factors can be regarded as 'reductionist' because they make no room for a continuous improvement strategy that could uncover reasons behind the achievements (or lack of achievements) of each programme. This is a core contribution of this research and points out the value of advocating the inclusion of intangible factors, as well as the participation of stakeholders in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs.

Importance of the research findings for CDS and DESEM programme

- In the two programmes evaluated in this research project, the SRPPE approach contributed to widening the view of the outcomes of an evaluation and to

recognizing the importance of considering the process of evaluation. Before the research project, both programmes considered only measurable indicators in their evaluations. During the process and at the end of the evaluation of the two programmes, it was clear to programme managers and stakeholders that those measurable indicators did not reveal valuable aspects of the programmes such as stakeholders' interests, and the conditions and the complexity of conflicts created within the programmes, nor did they provide a guide to ways of improving the programmes.

- This research recognized that evaluation is a local process that depends on the local context and its stakeholders (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Therefore, the researcher considered it appropriate to provide a thick description of the conditions and the context that surrounded each of the evaluations.
- This research provided indications of how evaluation was a teaching/learning process between the programme stakeholders. It provided participants in the evaluations with an opportunity to reflect on their roles and influence and that of other participants. It also provided a learning forum where the combination of the information from all participants contributed to the identification of their different CC&I, facilitated understanding of the programme and the different views of programme stakeholders and helped to explore ways of improving each programme.

The impact of the SRPPE approach over the CDS and DESEM programmes

This research had an impact on the practice of evaluation of programmes for MSMEs in Mexico because it promoted a framework for evaluation which valued the interactive process between the evaluator (facilitator) and the stakeholders of the programme. It also valued the multiple interrelated perceptions of the stakeholders, and the understanding of the complexity of the programme from the point of view of those who are engaged in it. It also had an impact on the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs because it introduced a methodology which addressed the perceptions of programme stakeholders about their claims, concerns and issues using the nominal group technique and focus groups. The methodology used in this research enabled direct interaction between stakeholders and avoided confrontations between groups of stakeholders. In addition, this research has already had an impact on the two programmes in which the

SRPPE approach was used. In the case of the CDS programme, which is offered throughout the 33 campuses of the ITESM system, the researcher expects the results of this research to have a broader impact on the evaluation process of the programme.

Similarly, the researcher expects the results of the evaluation of the DESEM programme to have a broader impact on the way the Young Entrepreneur programme is evaluated in the cities where the programme is offered. The programme managers and the stakeholders involved in this research can share their experiences with other programme managers and with other stakeholders, and make them aware of the importance of considering intangible factors in the evaluation of the programmes. They can also create awareness in the ITESM and DESEM community of the importance the intangible factors have for a better understanding of the programmes and their stakeholders and for seeking ways to improve the programmes. Moreover, they can also develop new ways of considering intangible factors in evaluation, by considering their own previous experiences.

It is considered that this research will continue changing the paradigm of evaluation that people maintain, as the SRPPE approach used in the evaluation of the two programmes is disseminated along with the results of the research. In this sense, the researcher intends to have meetings with the participants of the evaluations and with new people involved in the programmes in order to discuss the results of the research. In addition, these meetings could be used as part of the organizational learning the SRPPE approach intends to promote.

Finally, it is considered that the SRPPE approach also provided the researcher with the practical experience gained from the evaluation of the two programmes. This practical experience could also be used in the political arena to promote the evaluation approach used in this research to evaluate other MSME programmes. In returning to Mexico, it is considered that the experience and results of the evaluations of the two programmes could contribute to promote the SRPPE approach not only in the CDS and the DESEM programmes, but also in other programmes for MSMEs.

9.4 Possible weaknesses of each intervention

Before acknowledging the limitations of this research, this section reflects on the possible weaknesses of each intervention carried out during the fieldwork.

Although every effort was made to be as rigorous as possible in the use of the methodology, some situations may have influenced the process due to the different circumstances that emerged in the development of the interventions. Therefore, this section acknowledges those issues that influenced each intervention and that made the outcomes unique.

For example, in relation to the evaluation of the CDS programme, all the sessions were carried out in ITESM premises, which could have influenced the evaluation process. For example, students and teachers of the CDS programme openly criticised and questioned the programme; however, this was not the case with MSME owner-managers. In fact, at the end of the session the owner-managers commented that they were there because they were satisfied with the programme and the projects done in their businesses. A concern also arises as to the reasons why only three MSME owner-managers got involved in the evaluation. Speculating, it could be that MSME owner-managers who decided not to be involved in the evaluation process were not satisfied with the projects done or they did not feel comfortable expressing their criticisms of the programme in the premises where the programme was delivered.

Another factor that could have influenced the development of the evaluation was the presence of observers in the focus group sessions. The observers (those stakeholders who previously participated in defining the questions for the evaluation) were invited to the focus group sessions to support the evaluation process and as a way of giving transparency and credibility to that process. As previously noted, a summary of the discussions was sent to the participants of the focus groups, to the observers and to those who participated in the definition of questions for the evaluation. The purpose was to have feedback in relation to the accuracy of the information and also as a way of preventing the researcher being biased in the evaluation process. For example, while evaluating the CDS programme, in the focus group with students, the CDS manager attended as an observer for half of the session. The focus group with MSME owner-

managers had the presence, as observers, of a teacher and of the CDS manager. The first focus group with teachers had three teachers as observers, but they were involved in the group discussion, and finally, the second focus group with teachers had the CDS manager as an observer.

In relation to the intervention of the DESEM programme, its particular circumstances allowed only a short period of time to carry out the intervention. The lack of time could have made the process more directed and less participative, considering the researcher's interest in carrying out a second intervention and the successful intervention experienced with the first programme. The focus group sessions that evaluated the DESEM programme were carried out on the day of the programme closure, specifically, after a ceremony at which speeches had been given about the utility of the programme and where the participation of young entrepreneurs and university coordinators was recognized. Despite the recognition from some stakeholders (young entrepreneurs and university coordinators) of the programme weaknesses and their suggestions for ways to improve it, it could be that the atmosphere of the ceremony influenced the participants' opinions. Moreover, there was no private place where the focus groups could be carried out, which meant that other students and even members of the council and government representatives were near the place where the evaluation was occurring. Their presence could have inhibited stakeholders' opinions and participation in some way.

In spite of the possible weaknesses in each intervention, it is considered that each intervention had positive features and demonstrated how the SRPPE contributed to the conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of the evaluation.

Having recognized some limitations of the evaluations carried out, the following section considers the shortcomings and limitations of the whole research.

9.5 Research shortcomings and limitations

The limitations of this research are related to the evaluation approach used, to the process used to evaluate the two programmes for MSMEs and to the methods used to collect the research data.

Limited research approach.

This thesis was restricted to addressing practical participatory evaluation through the SRPPE approach developed in the previous chapters. The SRPPE offered a model in which programme stakeholders could participate in the process of evaluating a programme. However, developing a more “sophisticated” (using Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) term) evaluation approach could itself be considered a limitation of the research. For example, some tangible factors (typical of the first generation of evaluation) were not considered by the SRPPE approach. The SRPPE approach did not assess whether the objectives of the programmes were fulfilled or not (second generation of evaluation approach). Neither did the SRPPE approach intend to present the researcher as an external judge of the programme (third generation of evaluation approach). In addition, the evaluation approach developed in this thesis was not exhaustive; it included only some components considered relevant to address stakeholders’ claims, concerns and issues and to promote the conceptual, symbolic and instrumental uses of the evaluations. Future research is needed in order to determine what other components need to be considered and might be critical in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs.

Acceptance of the SRPPE approach as a way of complementing conventional approaches to evaluate programmes for MSMEs without having operationalised it in programmes offered by governmental institutions.

The two programmes for MSMEs evaluated in this research offered a convenient context within which to operationalise the SRPPE approach. Both programmes were offered within a university context and programme stakeholders were willing to participate in the evaluations by offering their time and ideas in seeking ways to improve the programmes. All this facilitated the completion of the evaluation.

Although this research project was not intended to be representative of all Mexican programmes for MSMEs, it provided, for the first time, an in-depth look at the context and characteristics of programmes for MSMEs through the claims, concerns and issues of the programme stakeholders. However, the operationalisation of the SRPPE approach in two programmes could be regarded as narrow, especially considering the variety of programmes offered by governmental agencies to support MSMEs in Mexico. As noted in Chapter Six efforts were made to access a programme offered by a governmental agency, however it was not possible to agree an evaluation. It would be interesting to

know whether managers of programmes for MSMEs offered by governmental agencies would be interested in considering intangible factors in the evaluation of programmes. In addition, it would be important to know if the SRPPE approach is an appropriate way to consider intangible factors in the context of governmental programmes.

The SRPPE approach assumed that stakeholders' recommendations would encourage the improvement of the particular programmes for MSMEs; however, it failed to offer a guide to decide among recommendations and failed to consider the feasibility of putting them into practice.

The SRPPE approach allowed stakeholders to offer recommendations for improvement of the programmes, which in their views were considered as changes and actions needed in order to improve them. The SRPPE approach addressed only part of the decision making process (the problem identification). It did not assist in the solution development. In this sense, programme managers expressed the intention of applying some of the recommendations. A longitudinal evaluation will be needed in order to assess the impact of implementing the recommendations on stakeholders' views of the programme on the one hand, and on the overall programme on the other.

Limited participation from programme stakeholders in the development of the case studies.

Even though the researcher's intention was to involve programme stakeholders in the development of the evaluation reports through case studies, restrictions of fieldwork resources and of distant communication limited the participation of programme stakeholders. Certainly, in order to regard the SRPPE approach as fully participatory, the involvement of stakeholders in these stages is also needed. However, it is considered that this research limitation does not represent a major drawback to the integrity of the research, as drafts of the case studies were shared with programme stakeholders.

Some authors have argued, in relation to the involvement of stakeholders in the technical activities of evaluation research, that "given the prevalence of the labor intensity issue, it may be prudent to rethink (stakeholders') depth of involvement" (Cousins & Earl, 1995b, pp. 172). Cousins, Donohue and Bloom (1996) noted that "stakeholder participation is generally limited to evaluation tasks that are not heavily technical" (p. 223). In this sense, stakeholders are involved in developing instruments

and data collection rather than in data processing, analysis and preparation of reports. Similarly, Mark and Shotland (1985) questioned extensive stakeholder involvement as an appropriate evaluation goal.

Little attention was paid to the common evaluation practice of metaevaluation (evaluation of the evaluation) of the approach used in this thesis.

Questions about stakeholders' perception of the usefulness of the SRPPE were only considered at the end of the fieldwork. The SRPPE approach failed to address a metaevaluation in accordance with the Program Evaluation Standards (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). Thus the SRPPE approach failed to address the importance of this feedback exercise that could be useful to improve the practice of evaluation of programmes for MSMEs. Therefore, future work on the participatory evaluation of programmes for MSMEs might consider it worthwhile to carry out a participatory metaevaluation that would open up a dialogue with programme stakeholders about ways of improving the evaluation practice.

Regardless of the limitations identified above, the SRPPE approach appears to be useful to address intangible factors (stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues) and to seek ways of improving programmes for MSMEs.

9.6 An agenda for policy/further actions

Research on small business is a source of influence in policy-making (Curran & Blackburn, 2001) and this research has considered some policy suggestions related to the implications that a participatory approach to evaluation has for the development of programmes for MSMEs. This section points out some implications for the development of programmes for MSMEs in the light of the outcomes of this research project.

From business orientation towards entrepreneur orientation

This research suggests that it could be appropriate for the Mexican Government to consider redirecting its SME's policy from the small business towards the driving force

behind the business (the entrepreneur) (e.g. towards considering their claims, concerns and issues regarding programmes for MSMEs); the development of the human capacities and the support through training, counselling and the development of networks instead of a focus upon financial aid (Lundström & Stevenson, 2001). This shift is compatible with ideas that regard owner-managers as central to the performance of SMEs (Burns, 1989; Davies & Kelly, 1972; Kubr, 1988) and also with characteristics of Mexican owner-managers, who are likely to avoid financial risks and contracting debts (Carpintero, 1998; ENAMIN, 2000; Perez-Lizaur, 1997; Skertchly, 2000). The intention here is to draw attention towards considering an entrepreneurship policy in Mexico, which considers the formulation of policies and programmes centred on the needs of owner-managers.

Similar tendencies for shifting towards entrepreneurial policies have been reflected in several countries such as Canada, United States and United Kingdom (Lundström & Stevenson, 2001; OECD, 1997c, 2000; Stevenson, 1996; Stevenson & Lundström, 2001). One of the reported benefits of this change in the United States and the United Kingdom was a reduction in unemployment rates (Audretsch & Thurik, 2000). In Mexico, during the 1990s, it was precisely due to the increase in unemployment and other economic difficulties faced in the country including the devaluation of the Mexican peso and an economic recession, that the government acknowledged the need to establish measures that could promote businesses and SMEs (Rueda, 2001). Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom supported a change of approach to economic development, which implied a focus on individuals and the development of their capacities within the community instead of on enterprises (Stevenson, 1996). Their experiences of a shift towards entrepreneurial policies could be of value in the Mexican context for the development and implementation of policies and programmes directed towards the entrepreneur.

From tangible benefits towards intangible benefits

Stevenson and Lundström (2001) noted as characteristics of an entrepreneurship policy that it should motivate more new entrepreneurs; should target individuals rather than the businesses; should include non-financial support, such as networks, educations and counselling and should expand to have a long-term orientation (see Table 3.8). However,

surprisingly, their approach to evaluation remains limited to the conventional practices of measuring and relying on narrow tangible factors (for example: net increases in the number/share of SMEs; the firm's growth in productivity; the number of clients that have been served; and the effectiveness of the programme in terms of cost-benefit). The same tendency of evaluating programmes based on quantifiable factors has been followed in Mexico.

A concern that could emerge while using this approach is related to the amount of resources assigned to the programme. This is because governments are often interested in expenditures and outcomes in assigning resources (CIPI-Banco Mundial, 1999; Gibb, 1990a). Stame (1999) suggested that, in order to deal with this concern, emphasis should be placed on understanding the relationship between the results of the programme and other effects and how to achieve those results. This research, therefore, supports the idea of considering intangible factors as a way of complementing the traditional evaluation views used, in particular, in MSME programme evaluation. However, further research is needed on the integration of qualitative and quantitative evaluation approaches.

The importance of these findings for the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs and in particular for the two programmes evaluated in this research, could enable the exploration of the potential of the SRPPE approach discussed in this thesis to be developed and enriched further:

- It would be useful to analyse whether or not the evaluated programmes for MSMEs implemented the recommendations suggested by stakeholders, and if so, to assess the impact programme changes had over stakeholders' perceptions of the programme. In this sense, the programmes evaluated present an opportunity for further research using longitudinal evaluation.
- The evaluation of programmes for MSMEs using the SRPPE approach could be replicated in programmes offered by governmental agencies.
- Further development in considering other components that might be relevant to the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs represents an important area of future research.

- More research is needed in order to integrate metaevaluation and critical reflection practices in the SRPPE approach. In this sense, the evaluation practices could be improved while still carrying the evaluation of the programmes, and programme stakeholders could critically reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the approach in the hope of contributing to the improvement of the practice of evaluation of programmes for MSMEs.
- Finally, this research argued in favour of complementing traditional evaluation approaches of programmes for MSMEs by considering intangible factors in the evaluation of the programmes. Programmes for MSMEs and participatory evaluation would each benefit from further research on the integration of quantitative and qualitative evaluation approaches. More research and cases studies that seek the integration of these evaluation approaches are necessary.

9.7 Summary of contributions

- This thesis has contributed to the overall knowledge of evaluation of programmes for MSMEs in a three-fold manner: first, by arguing in favour of considering intangible factors in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs, second, through the development of the SRPPE approach and third, through the application of the SRPPE approach and its examination in two programmes for MSMEs.

Whilst it cannot be stated that this research provided an exhaustive evaluation of the programmes studied; the nature of this research made the evaluation of the particular programmes address the different perspectives and constructions of its stakeholders. However, efforts were made to assure criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the interpretations developed.

- The review of the way programmes for MSME have been evaluated, presented in Chapter Three, was useful in understanding the context of the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs and in identifying the need to move the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs towards participatory approaches of evaluation.

- This need identified in Chapter Three, informed by the developments in programme evaluation, presented in Chapter Two, guided the search for complementing actual evaluation practices in programmes for MSMEs by considering more participatory approaches to evaluation. The research found that Fourth Generation Evaluation was a more theoretical than practical approach; therefore, the research sought accommodation with a more pragmatic evaluation approach (Utilization-focused evaluation).
- In accommodating Fourth Generation Evaluation and Utilization-focused evaluation, Chapter Four presented the Situationally Responsive Practical Participatory Evaluation (SRPPE) approach of this research. The SRPPE approach highlighted various components that could affect the evaluation process and that have been used in educational evaluation (with components for decision-making, political, learning and characteristics of the evaluator).
- The idea that intangible factors (stakeholders' CC&I) inform the components of the SRPPE approach was important to better understand programmes for MSMEs; to understand the different stakeholders' views; to identify conflicts because of different stakeholders' interests and to seek ways of improving programmes by considering the stakeholders' points of view. In this sense, the SRPPE approach provided a forum where stakeholders' intangible factors were considered and addressed in the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs, as part of the problem and as part of the solution. This reflected the multidimensional character of evaluation, because the components considered affect and influence one another.
- This thesis allowed intangible factors (stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues) to drive the evaluation of the two programmes for MSMEs that were presented through case studies. Both case studies allowed identification of the needs of the programme stakeholders. In this sense, the evaluation of the two programmes, on the one hand, allowed identification of stakeholders' particular claims, concerns and issues influenced by their particular experiences and interests. On the other hand, it also allowed stakeholders' claims, concerns and issues to

become the means of seeking programme improvement through stakeholders' recommendations. From the example of the two case studies developed in the thesis, it is perhaps difficult to generalize to other programmes for MSMEs, but in both programmes, aspects related to the procedures followed within the programme and aspects of the structure of the programme were identified as major concerns between what the programmes offered and what stakeholders needed.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Example of the topic agenda developed for nominal group technique sessions

Topic Agenda for the definition of questions for the evaluation of CDS programme

Date 20th of February 2002

- I. Welcoming and Introduction** **Time (10 min.)**
- Personal presentation.
 - Introduction to the participatory evaluation approach.
 - Objective of the nominal group technique (NGT) session.
 - Personal presentation of participants (projects in which they have worked with CDS).
- II. Nominal Group Technique: Method for the generation of evaluation's questions** **Time (10 min.)**
- Objective
 - Stages of the NGT process:
 - Silent generation of ideas in writing
 - Round robin recording of ideas
 - Clarification of ideas
 - Clustering of ideas
 - Voting and ranking
 - Participation rules:
 1. Each participant will speak in turn, without interrupting other participants.
 2. Present the idea or concept, limiting to a brief explanation when necessary or when requested by another participant.
 3. Do not argue against others' ideas.
 4. If an idea presented makes a participant think of another idea, write it down to share it later.
 5. The facilitator's role is to guide the discussion in such a way that the opinions of all participants can be understood without having confrontations and discussion.

III. NGT Dynamic

Time (40 min.)

1) Silent generation of ideas.

Triggering questions:

- What things are you interested in evaluating?
- What are the 10 things that we (as evaluators) do not know with certainty about the different actors in CDS (students, teachers, businesses and CDS management)?
- What type of changes would you like to see in the programme's clients?

2) Round robin recording of ideas (each person shares one idea at a time)

Give numbers to each idea!

3) Clarification of ideas (further explanation of ideas)

4) Clustering of ideas

Name of a category.

Cluster ideas if they are related to similar topic.

Eliminate duplicated ideas.

5) Voting and ranking

Select the most relevant cluster.

IV. Conclusion

Time (5 min.)

- Thanks for participation
- Explanation of the following stages of the research project (focus group discussions, transcripts from the session, comments and feedback of the session, data analysis and development of case studies).
- Ask for their e-mails.

Appendix 2 - Example of an invitation letter to participate in the definition of questions for the evaluation of the CDS programme

Toluca, Estado de México 14th of February 2002.

Dear (student/teacher/business owner-manager):

My name is Karina Rosas and I am carrying out fieldwork for my PhD, which is related to the evaluation of programmes for MSMEs.

The Centre for Development Support (CDS) of ITESM Campus Toluca has agreed on conducting a participatory evaluation of their programme: Business Clinics.

Through this letter, I would like to invite you to a session in which the questions for the evaluation of the CDS programme will be defined by the different stakeholders of the programme (students, teachers and business owner-managers). The evaluation will concentrate on these questions in order to seek ways of improving the programme.

As a guide to reflect, in advance, on questions that you would like the evaluation to address I include the following questions:

- What things are you interested in evaluating?**
- What are the 10 things that we (as evaluators) do not know with certainty about the different actors in CDS (students, teachers, businesses and CDS management)?**
- What type of changes would you like to see in the programme's clients?**

This session will be organised using a technique that allows interaction between participants and minimize conflicts (nominal group technique). In future sessions, the questions defined for the evaluation will be discussed using focus groups.

Acknowledging the importance of students, teachers and business owner-managers' views about the CDS programme in order to improve its services; I think this is an opportunity in which the various stakeholders of the CDS programme, can help the programme to reflect on the service provided and the way in which the programme can be improved. Your participation will be completely confidential and of great value for this evaluation.

The evaluation session will take place on **Wednesday 20th of February 2002 at 17:15 hours in Building III, Morelia room in ITESM Toluca Campus.**

I would be grateful if you can attend to this session.

Sincerely,

Ing. Reyna Karina Rosas Contreras
PhD Research Student,
University of Hull, United Kingdom

PS. Please confirm your attendance in the following e-mail: karina.rosas@itesm.mx or at telephone: 279990 ext. 2751.

Appendix 3 - Example of the topic agenda developed for focus group sessions

Topic Agenda for the CDS students focus group

Date 3rd of April, 2002

- | | | |
|----------------|---|---------------------------|
| I. | Presentation | Time (10 min.) |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal presentation. • Ask for permission to tape record the session. • Personal presentation of participants (Ask for the projects and courses in which they have been involved with the CDS programme). • Put the names of the participants on individual labels and ask them to stick them on a visible part of their clothing. • Presentation of the observers and their roles. • Introduction to the evaluation project (explain the process and where the questions came from, the importance of their involvement). | |
| II. | Focus Group Discussion | Time (60 min.) |
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1. As students, what are you expecting from a CDS project? Have your expectations been fulfilled? Recommendations *Summarise 2. Do you consider it important that students be involved in CDS projects? Why? Recommendations *Summarise 3. What are the differences in doing projects with CDS and doing them independently? Recommendations *Summarise 4. What type of support is needed in order to develop CDS projects? Recommendations *Summarise 5. What do you think of the communication and support given by teacher and businessmen? Recommendations *Summarise 6. In developing a CDS project, have you changed? In what way? Recommendations *Summarise 7. Were you satisfied with being involved in a CDS project? Recommendations *Summarise | |

8. How did you know about CDS? How do you consider the promotion of CDS?

Recommendations

***Summarise**

9. What are the strengths and weaknesses of CDS?

Recommendations

***Summarise**

10. Do you consider that CDS should exist?

Recommendations

***Summarise**

III. Conclusion

Time (5 min.)

- Thanks for participation
- Explanation of the following stages of the research project (other focus groups, transcripts from the session, comments and feedback of the session, data analysis and development of case studies).
- Ask for their e-mails.

Appendix 4 - Questions asked during the CDS focus group interviews

Students' focus group

2. As students, what are you expecting from a CDS project? Have your expectations been fulfilled?
3. Do you consider it important that students be involved in CDS projects? Why?
4. What are the differences in doing projects with CDS and doing them independently?
5. What type of support is needed in order to develop CDS projects?
6. What do you think of the communication and support given by teacher and businessmen?
7. In developing a CDS project, have you changed? In what way?
8. Are you satisfied with being involved in a CDS project?
9. How did you know about CDS? How do you consider the promotion of CDS?
10. What are the strengths and weaknesses of CDS?
11. Do you consider that CDS should exist?

Business owner-managers' focus group

1. What were your expectations at the beginning of the CDS project? Were they fulfilled? How? Why?
2. How do you regard the CDS project? As a way of having a solution to certain problem? Or as an improvement opportunity? Why?
3. What is the view of the businessman of sharing information of the business? What were the limits? Were you afraid of sharing the information?
4. Does CDS know what you expect of the project? Did you make an agreement specifying what the project was going to be about?
5. How was the CDS project presented to you? What was your view when you learned that the project was going to be done by students?
6. How do you regard the communication you had with CDS in order to define the objectives of the project?
7. How important is it for you to know about the existence of these types of programmes?
8. As businessmen, what strengths and weakness did you identify in CDS?
9. Do you consider that CDS should exist?

Teachers' focus group

1. What support do you think students need in order to do a CDS project? What can be done to grant students the support needed?
2. What support is needed from the owner-manager to do the project? and What resources and support are needed from the University?
3. Are you satisfied with your participation in CDS projects? Why?
4. What is the motive that teachers have to be involved in a CDS projects? Were your expectations fulfilled?
5. How do you regard the communication between CDS and teachers?
6. Who do you think benefits from the CDS programme? Should teachers be involved? And students?
7. What differences do you perceive between working with CDS and working independently?
8. Do projects fulfil the purpose of solving problems? Why? If not, what should be done?
9. Do you think the owner-manager is satisfied with the CDS programme?
10. Were the students satisfied with their participation? How can you tell?
11. As teachers, what strengths and weaknesses do you identify in CDS programme?
12. Do you consider that CDS should exist?

Appendix 5 - Example of an invitation letter to participate in the evaluation of the CDS programme

Toluca, Estado de México 18th of March 2002.

Dear Sir/Madam:
(Name of the business)

Through this letter I would like to inform you that an evaluation of the Centre for Development Support (CDS) of ITESM Toluca Campus is being conducted. This evaluation has a participatory approach in which the questions the evaluation aims to answer have been developed by CDS stakeholders and in the same way, those questions will be answered by CDS stakeholders.

Acknowledging the importance of students, teachers and business owner-managers' views about the CDS programme in order to improve its services, I am inviting you to participate in the owner-managers' evaluation session of the CDS programme. Your participation will be completely confidential and of great value for this evaluation.

The evaluation session will take place on **Thursday 10th of April 2002 at 19:00 hours in Building III, room 323 in ITESM Toluca Campus**. I think this is an opportunity to express your opinions about the CDS programme, and above all to reflect on the service provided.

I would be grateful if you can attend this evaluation session.

Sincerely,

Ing. Reyna Karina Rosas Contreras
PhD Research Student,
University of Hull, United Kingdom

PS. Please confirm your attendance in the following e-mail: karina.rosas@itesm.mx or at telephone: 279990 ext. 2751.

Appendix 6 - Questions asked during DESEM's focus group interviews

University coordinators' focus group

- 1) Are or were young entrepreneurs motivated to form their enterprises or were they left to work independently?
From whom do they or did they receive more support?
How can they also become sources of motivation to other young entrepreneurs?
- 2) Does the programme help to form the young entrepreneurs? How can you tell?
In which areas?
- 3) What kind of support can the university give to the young entrepreneurs? Was it enough? Why?
- 4) Were the procedures followed as part of the DESEM programme clear for young entrepreneurs?
- 5) As university coordinators, How can you motivate the young entrepreneurs more?
- 6) What can be done so that enterprises created continue after the programme finishes?
- 7) How can a follow up area be implemented in order to know the impact the programme has over young entrepreneurs?
- 8) What kind of support do entrepreneurial advisors give or have they given to the young entrepreneurs? Do they fulfil their role?
- 9) How can DESEM have a more direct contact with young entrepreneurs? What strategy can be implemented for the communication between DESEM and young entrepreneurs?
- 10) What strengths and weaknesses do you identify in the programme?

Young entrepreneurs' focus group

- 1) Do you (young entrepreneurs) or did you receive motivation in the programme or were you left to work independently?
From whom do you or did you receive that motivation?
What can we do so that you also motivate your business partners?
- 2) Does the programme help to form you? How can you tell? In which areas?
- 3) How can DESEM have a direct contact with Young Entrepreneurs?

What strategies can be implemented in the communication between Young Entrepreneurs and DESEM?

- 4) What can be done so that the programme becomes part of your working life?
- 5) What can be done so that your enterprises continue after the programme finishes?
- 6) What concerns do you have in relation to the DESEM programme? How can DESEM managers know about them?
- 7) What strengths and weaknesses do you see in the DESEM programme?

Appendix 7 - Schedule of fieldwork activities

The following table presents the schedule of activities which encompass the activities carried out during the fieldwork period from January 2002 to May 2002.

| Date | Activity |
|-----------------|---|
| January | |
| 15/01/02 | -Preparation of the fieldwork activities. |
| 28/01/02 | -Interview with CDS programme manager and general presentation of the research project. |
| 30/01/02 | -List of topics related to the programme the researcher was interested to know was sent on request of the programme manager. |
| February | |
| 08/02/02 | -Presentation of the research project and discussion of the practicalities of the intervention with CDS programme manager. -List of teachers that had participated in the programme was provided on request of the researcher. |
| 11/02/02 | -Personal interview with a teacher that later was involved in FG3. -Personal interview with a teacher that later was involved in FG4. -Personal interview with a teacher that later was involved in the definition of evaluation and in FG3. |
| 12/02/02 | -Personal interview with a teacher that later was involved in the definition of evaluation and in FG3. -Personal interview with a teacher that later was involved in the definition of evaluation. -Personal interview with a teacher involved in CDS programme. -Personal interview with a teacher that later was involved in the definition of the evaluation. -Personal interview with a teacher that later was involved in the definition of the evaluation, in FG2 as observer and in FG3. |
| 13/02/02 | -Personal interview with a teacher involved in CDS programme. -Personal interview with a teacher involved in CDS programme. |
| 13/02/02 | -Invitation of teachers, students and business owner-managers to the definition of evaluation session. |
| 19/02/02 | -Personal interview with a teacher involved in CDS programme. |
| 20/02/02 | -CDS definition of evaluation session using NGT. -The session was tape-recorded and a transcript was made. |
| 28/02/02 | -Summary of the NGT session was produced and sent to participants of the definition of evaluation session. |
| March | |
| 01/03/02 | -First interview with DESEM programme manager and general presentation of the research project. |
| 02/03/02 | -Discussion of the practicalities of DESEM programme evaluation. |
| 04/03/02 | -Letter sent to the programme council for the approval of the intervention. |
| 05/03/02 | -DESEM's council approved the research intervention in their monthly meeting. |
| 06/03/02 | -Letters were sent to the technological university directors to inform them about the research project and seeking their consent to participate. |
| 15/03/02 | -NGT session to define questions for the evaluation of DESEM programme. |
| 18/03/02 | -Meeting with DESEM programme managers to discuss the practicalities of the focus group session. -Summary of DESEM's NGT session was produced and sent to participants of the definition of evaluation session. |
| 19/03/02 | -Invitation letters for the focus group sessions were produced and sent to students and business owner-managers participants of CDS programme. -Students and univeristy coordinators' focus groups were carried out to evaluate DESEM programme. |

| Cont. Appendix 7 - Schedule of fieldwork activities | |
|--|--|
| Date | Activity |
| April | |
| 01/04/02 | -E-mail reminders of students focus group session were sent to students that had participated in CDS and the group of programme stakeholders that participated in the definition of evaluation were invited as observers. |
| 02/04/02 | -Summaries from DESEM's evaluations sessions were produced and sent to the university coordinators and to DESEM's programme managers. |
| 03/04/02 | -Students focus group to evaluate CDS programme (FG1). -The session was tape-recorded and a transcript was made. |
| 04/04/02 | -Follow up calls made to business owner-managers to confirm their participation in the focus group session. |
| 05/04/02 | -E-mail reminders for teachers focus group session were sent to teachers that had |
| 08/04/02 | participated in CDS programme. |
| 10/04/02 | -Business owner-managers focus group session to evaluate CDS programme (FG2). |
| 12/04/02 | -Teachers first focus group session to evaluate CDS programme (FG3). |
| 18/04/02 | -Summaries from CDS evaluation sessions were produced and sent to participants of the sessions and to the participants of the definition of evaluation session. |
| 19/04/02 | -Meeting with CDS programme manager to analyse the evaluation progress. |
| 29/04/02 | -Meeting with CDS programme manager to discuss students and teachers focus groups information. |
| 30/04/02 | -Meeting with CDS programme manager to discuss teachers and business-owner managers information. |
| May | |
| 09/05/02 | -Meeting with CDS programme manager to discuss the progress of the evaluation. |
| 09/05/02 | -Meeting with DESEM programme managers to discuss the information gained from the focus group sessions. |
| 20/05/02 | -Interview with CDS programme manager to discuss the outcomes of the evaluation. |
| 24/05/02 | -Meeting with CDS programme manager to discuss the practicalities of the last focus group with teachers. -Teachers second focus group session to evaluate CDS programme (FG4) -Meeting with DESEM programme manager to discuss the outcomes of the evaluation. |

Appendix 8 - Translation of the questionnaire used to evaluate the CDS programme

CDS - Business Projects Final Presentation Evaluation

With the objective of evaluating the performance of the project(s) developed in your enterprise, we ask you to consider the following aspects, using the suggested scale, selecting with an X, the mark that you consider in each of the points.

We thank for your comments at the end of the evaluation.

Name of the enterprise:

Name of the representative:

Project:

Name of the student(s): _____

1.- PRESENTATION

Oral expression: The student showed control in his/her expression, with the aid of non verbal communication, an appropriate personal presentation, and an excellent disposition towards the audience.

1.- Excellent 2.- Very good 3.- Good 4.- Regular 5.- Bad NO: No opinion

Techniques of support: The student used (software, animation, graphs, tables and others) in order to improve the quality of the presentation.

1.- Excellent 2.- Very good 3.- Good 4.- Regular 5.- Bad NO: No opinion

2.- DEPTH OF THE TOPIC: The student developed appropriately the content of the project, offering a detail of its content.

1.- Excellent 2.- Very good 3.- Good 4.- Regular 5.- Bad NO: No opinion

3.- APLICATION OF THE TOPIC OF THE PROJECT: The student answered the specific needs of the enterprise.

1.- Excellent 2.- Very good 3.- Good 4.- Regular 5.- Bad NO: No opinion

4.- FULFILMENT OF THE PROJECT: The student fulfilled, on time, the defined objectives of the project.

1.- Excellent 2.- Very good 3.- Good 4.- Regular 5.- Bad NO: No opinion

COMMENTS

Appendix 9 - Recommendations made by the different stakeholders in relation to the general issues of information about the CDS programme

Students' recommendations

- To organize a congress in which students could show their real life projects and to share their experiences.
- To publicize the CDS programme better by presenting the results of each project to students of the first semesters. Inviting business owner-managers to present to students the projects they were interested in having done in the future.
- That CDS inform programme stakeholders what the CDS programme is about.
- To develop a database of enterprises interested in the development of projects and with whom agreements have been made.

Business owner-managers' recommendations

- To clarify the role each of the participants plays in the project development.
- To clarify the procedures and the process involved in the development of the project.
- That business owner-managers get involved in giving information to other owner-managers about the projects that have been done through CDS programme.

Teachers' recommendations

- To prepare a table which compares the different types of programmes CDS can develop; detailing the people involved, their type of involvement; the time in which the project can be carried out; the costs involved, and what could be achieved.
- To clarify to all the participants of a project, what the programme is about and what can be achieved through the project.
- To inform all the participants of each project about the monetary transactions involved as well as other benefits agreed by owner-managers and CDS manager.
- To publish in the internal magazine of ITESM the projects that are being done.

- To make a web page providing information about previous projects done, those currently being done, and the teachers and students involved.
- To clarify CDS intention of benefiting the students academically.
- To perform and publish a follow up study in order to learn about successful implementations, the changes that projects needed, and the reasons that blocked implementation.
- To make available for other students the projects that have been done because, right now, only teachers and CDS have the information.

Appendix 10 - Recommendations made by the different stakeholders in relation to the general issues of teachers' supervision and involvement

Students' recommendations

- That teachers should offer students help in order to solve problems and clarify doubts during the development of the project.
- That teachers should allow students not to attend all the lectures in order to spend more time within enterprises.
- That teachers should get involved, before the semester starts, in the process of project formalization (definition of projects and agreements with enterprises).
- That the teachers review, before the semester starts, the projects in order to ensure their relation with the course and to limit them to what can be achieved within a semester.
- That teachers should offer training in other areas, depending on each project, because generally, the course contents was not enough to deal with real life problems.
- To allow the development of a project throughout different courses, depending on the project and its complexity.

Business owner-managers' recommendations

- To arrange, at the beginning of each semester, a schedule of meetings between business owner-manager, students and teacher.
- Teachers should visit the enterprise in order to have more contact with the owner-manager and to develop better projects.

Teachers' recommendations

- Teachers should be involved from the beginning of negotiations with the enterprise in order to assure that the project is related to the course and that the enterprise could provide the necessary information.
- An academic committee, of each academic department, should analyse each project in order to determine its value according to the academic content, its relevance for the course and to decide whether to accept the project or not.

-CDS should present possible projects through a web page, with a brief description of the project so that teachers could decide whether to participate or not.

-The department director, the career director and the teacher should be allowed to decide if the project could be developed throughout two courses instead of one; taking into account the complexity of the project and the time demanded from students.

-CDS should be informed of the level of teachers' interest in working in the CDS programme.

-Teachers should share their experiences about the projects they have developed with students in order to identify problems and to learn from other experiences.

Appendix 11 - Recommendations made by the different stakeholders in relation to the general issues of CDS involvement in project development

Students' recommendations

- CDS should provide students with the necessary resources to develop each project (e.g. photocopies, prints and travel expenses).
- CDS should give students a certificate which legitimizes their participation in the development of a real project. The certificate should detail the achievements and the enterprise where a project was developed.
- CDS should involve the teachers, before the semester starts, in the process of project formalization.
- CDS should make the administrative arrangements with business owner-managers before the semester starts in order to start the project on time.
- CDS should have meetings with the students in the middle of the semester, instead that at the end, in order to be informed about the development of each project, the students' experiences and if there are any problems.

Business owner-managers' recommendations

- CDS should make a diagnosis of the problems of each enterprise in order to identify possible projects.
- CDS should offer the development of more integral projects, dividing them in different courses and along more semesters.

Teachers' recommendations

- CDS should develop a contract making clear the confidential nature of information in the development of projects. Students should also sign the contract because ITESM should have protection in relation to how business information is managed.
- To include in the contract, signed between CDS and owner-managers, confirmation of the approval of the different participants from the business that are to be involved in the project.

-CDS should involve teachers in the early stages of the negotiation and definition of projects because CDS is not a specialist in the different areas where projects are being developed.

-CDS should give students economic compensation to pay the expenses they incur during the development of each project, such as travel expenses, prints and photocopies.

-CDS should formalize its relationship with other academic departments in order to be able to use the resources from other departments, such as laboratories and equipment.

-CDS should keep minutes of the meetings between students, teacher and owner-manager in order to register the agreements made.

-CDS should establish meetings with students and teachers in order to learn about the project, the academic progress and if any problem has emerged during the project development.

-CDS should give information to the students and teachers about the monetary transactions and other contract conditions between CDS and the enterprise for which a project is being developed.

-CDS should have more personnel to contact more enterprises and have more projects.

-CDS should have a feedback meeting, with the participants of the projects, using focus groups to be informed about the progress of the projects; because due to the dimensions of problems, sometimes they cannot be unveiled using a questionnaire format.

-To include CDS as part of the academic departments, to avoid the problems related to the academia.

Appendix 12 - Recommendations made by the different stakeholders in relation to the general issues of implementation of projects

Students' recommendations

- Students should be involved in the implementation of projects in order to see their impact on the enterprise.
- Students should not only do projects during a semester, but also follow up implemented projects, even though if this is not as part of the course.

Business owner-managers' recommendations

- Students and teachers should emphasise the link between the possible implementation of a project and economic impact on the business, such as sales increases or cost reductions.

Teachers' recommendations

- CDS should follow up the projects in order to inform the students, teachers and other owner-managers, whether projects were implemented.
- CDS should focus more on the number of projects implemented than on the number of proposals developed.

Appendix 13 - Recommendations made by the different stakeholders in relation to the general issues of business owner-managers information sharing

Students' recommendations

-To make sure that owner-managers understand the win-win relationship which CDS aims to promote. On the one hand, students are interested in learning by putting into practice their knowledge. On the other hand, business owner-managers are interested in developing a project they require; therefore, they should share information.

-Business owner-managers should cooperate in the development of projects by getting involved in defining the projects, identifying the required information and giving access to it.

Teachers' recommendations

-To involve teachers in the negotiation of the project, so they will know what the project is about and can identify the type of information needed, and proceed with those projects only where there is information available.

-To clarify, in the contract signed between CDS and the enterprise, the confidentiality not only of the information needed and generated from the project, but also of the business material needed for the project (e.g. equipment, prototypes and pieces of machinery).

Appendix 14 - Recommendations made by the different stakeholders in relation to the general issues of development of projects in large enterprises

Students' recommendations

- To allow students to work in the development of projects for small businesses during the 5th, 6th and 7th semesters, to gain experience in problem solving.
- That in semesters 8th and 9th students could develop projects in large enterprises in order to have both experiences.

Teachers' recommendations

- That an academic committee should analyse the projects with large enterprises and determine the amount that should be charged for each project.
- To make the negotiation process different when projects are to be done for large enterprises; charges should be different and students should receive a benefit from that or, if not, those benefits should be directed to the community.

Appendix 15 - Recommendations made by the different stakeholders in relation to the general issues of procedures of the DESEM programme

Young entrepreneurs' recommendations

- That DESEM managers or an external advisor appointed by DESEM give consultancy to young entrepreneurs in relation to the procedures that have to be followed as part of DESEM programme.
- To disseminate more publicity about the DESEM programme in each of the communities where the programme is offered.
- To eliminate the liquidation phase of the small firms at the end of the programme, because young entrepreneurs considered it discouraging.
- To give follow up to the small firms in order to know their progress and the difficulties faced.
- To link small firms with institutions that could provide economic support, so they would have more capital at the beginning of the programme and economic support to continue with the firm after the programme.

University coordinators' recommendations

- That DESEM give consultancy to young entrepreneurs in the areas the programme procedures emphasise, or that specialized courses be provided in those areas.
- To eliminate the liquidation phase of the firm and to follow up each firm after the end of the programme.
- That DESEM help young entrepreneurs to find sponsors for their firms, such as enterprises (customers) potentially interested in their products.
- That DESEM have more contact with governmental agencies to give young entrepreneurs economic support and to encourage the continuity of the firm.

Appendix 16 - Recommendations made by the different stakeholders in relation to the general issues of entrepreneurial advisors' role

Young entrepreneurs' recommendations

- DESEM managers should select more effective entrepreneurial advisors and should monitor their performance more closely.
- DESEM managers should consider the interests and business expertise of entrepreneurial advisors when they assign them to the small firms.

University coordinators' recommendations

- DESEM should consider more carefully the area of the small firm and match it with the appropriate entrepreneurial advisors.
- DESEM managers should appoint local entrepreneurial advisors who know about the region and about the area of the small firm, in addition to the general entrepreneurial advisor, in order to have a more direct contact with young entrepreneurs.

Appendix 17 - Recommendations made by the different stakeholders in relation to the general issues of DESEM's communication and interaction with young entrepreneurs

Young entrepreneurs' recommendations

-DESEM should motivate the participation of young entrepreneurs in the programme by:

- a) Involving young entrepreneurs in sharing with other programme participants their experiences and achievements, such as the level of sales and the expected future of the firm.
- b) Inviting young entrepreneurs who participated with DESEM in the past to develop their social service⁴⁴ in DESEM. They could become a source of knowledge for young entrepreneurs and DESEM by giving consultancy and sharing the experiences they had with their firm in that region.

-DESEM should acknowledge the achievements of young entrepreneurs' by giving them a certificate of participation at the end of the programme.

-DESEM should give talks to young entrepreneurs informing them about the DESEM programme, the procedures required to establish a firm, the areas the programme emphasises and what to expect at the end of the programme.

-DESEM should establish feedback mechanisms or meetings with young entrepreneurs to receive information from programme stakeholders.

-DESEM should have more communication with university coordinators.

-DESEM should follow up each small firm to learn about its progress, and the difficulties and doubts young entrepreneurs face in the programme.

University coordinators' recommendations

-DESEM should give motivational talks to young entrepreneurs.

-DESEM should inform young entrepreneurs about previous firms created and their progress.

-DESEM should continue its relationship with young entrepreneurs by following up the firms even after the course is finished.

⁴⁴ Activities for the benefit of the community that all students about to graduate have to carry out in accordance with rules stated by the Ministry of Education.

-DESEM should visit the universities frequently to have direct contact with young entrepreneurs, to be informed about their progress and the difficulties faced in the programme.

-DESEM should encourage young entrepreneurs to share their experiences with other programme participants.

Appendix 18 - Recommendations made by the different stakeholders in relation to the general issues of the university coordinator's role

Young entrepreneurs' recommendations

-University coordinators should negotiate with the University courses about areas that DESEM programme recommends young entrepreneurs to create.

University coordinators' recommendations

-DESEM should encourage exchange of information and experiences among the different university coordinators with the purpose of establishing the best practices.

-DESEM should inform university coordinators of the support and consultancy they could offer to young entrepreneurs.

-DESEM should train university coordinators in the procedures they require as part of the programme, so that they can also provide consultancy to young entrepreneurs.

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