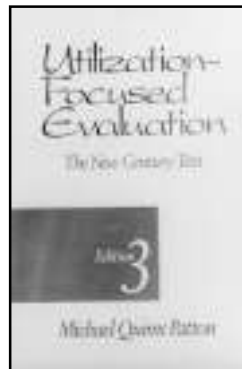


these areas including the Tokyo Round Anti-dumping Code and the how they differ from the latest agreements; the significance of the discussions on anti-dumping duties and countervailing measures within the overall context of the Uruguay Round negotiations; and the future prospects of such protective measures. This contextual information would have helped place the factual content on procedural and legal matters in a proper perspective. At present, one finds oneself wading through too much administrative and other technical detail without appreciating why and how these procedures have arisen or their significance in the larger context of international trade and protectionism.

The arguments notwithstanding, *Anti-dumping and Countervailing Measures* is a good book to keep ready on the shelf for reference purposes but is not appropriate for the student of international trade looking for insight on the subject.

- Rupa Chanda

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Utilization-Focused Evaluation: The New Century Text

By Michael Quinn Patton (1996), Sage Publications. pp 431 Price : \$ 69.95 (Cloth) \$ 29.95 (Paper)

Most organised human endeavours are underpinned by the desire to improve the human condition. Any organisation of such activities relies on some notion of a desirable state of affairs, of the goals to be attained and an understanding of a process or path to achieve the chosen ends. Organisations and programmes are established to implement certain functions that are intended to facilitate the attainment of the targets. Evaluation becomes (or should be) an essential part of any such organisation or programme to assess its effectiveness, and develop ways to improve on the desired goals and/or means to accomplish them. *Utilization-Focused Evaluation: The New Century Text* by Michael Quinn Patton has attempted to familiarise readers with the theoretical essentials of the field

of evaluation and provide quite specific and detailed practical advice on conducting evaluation studies.

Patton has emphasised the fact that evaluation is not an easy process. If not handled properly, all the efforts that go into the process of producing evaluation reports can go to waste because they may remain unutilised. An evaluation study that does not result in subsequent decisions/actions is waste of critical professional time and scarce resources. Hence, the focus of the entire book is on conducting evaluation studies such that their outputs are 'utilised', rather than on achieving 'scientific' perfection during the process of evaluation.

According to Patton, "Utilization-Focused Evaluation begins with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use; therefore evaluators should facilitate the evaluation process and design any evaluation with careful consideration of how everything that is done, from beginning to end, will effect use . . . the focus of utilization-focused evaluation is on intended use by intended users." (page 20)

The book has cited numerous examples (mostly from North America), which suggest that evaluations that focused more on methodological purity than utilisation, were more likely to gather dust than be used to implement real improvements. This is because their outputs, although academically sound, did not necessarily provide information that was useful for

action. Patton has reasoned that the aim of ‘scientific research’ is to “discover knowledge, test theories, establish truth and generalize across time and space”, whereas the purpose of evaluations is to “inform decisions, clarify options, identify improvements, and provide information about programs and policies with the contextual boundaries of time, place, values, and politics”. His entire focus has been on making knowledgeable choices during the process of evaluation to improve the possibility of ultimate utilisation.

Evaluation is a very complex process. First, it involves determining measures of effectiveness. Since measures of effectiveness reflect the values, beliefs and interests of those who develop and/or use them, a major task of the evaluation team is to establish a set of measures that are acceptable to the stakeholders involved, particularly the primary users. Second, it involves designing a process which serves the purpose of the evaluation. The design may vary based on whether a study is intended to render judgment, facilitate improvement, or generate knowledge. Finally, careful attention has to be given to designing a process of information dissemination that maintains the credibility of the evaluation process, and at the same time provides useful information to the intended users of the evaluation study.

Part 1 of the book, consisting of five chapters, has made the case for utilisation-focused management. Patton believes that while there is a place for stud-

ies targeted at discovering the truth by being faithful to certain ‘scientific’ research methodologies, evaluators should have an explicit desire to improve the conditions of the organisations or programmes they evaluate. It is acceptable for evaluators to use less than perfect data, underdeveloped measurement techniques, or other information that is outside the ‘scientific’ framework, as long as it does not bias the decision or action that is to be taken based on the evaluation. Though he has not suggested that ‘scientific’ research methodologies be abandoned, Patton has argued strongly for the need to be flexible in order to produce an output that is utilised by the intended users.

Part 2, which again consists of five chapters, has further elaborated on some of the choices and decisions that have to be made during an evaluation process to ensure utilisation of the evaluation output without compromising on the accuracy of the findings. This section has focused on the dynamics of an evaluation process with each chapter dealing with different aspects of the process.

Part 3, which consists of three chapters, has discussed the methods to be used to acquire data and interpret it. Chapter 12 is particularly significant because it attempts to address a larger philosophical debate on the nature of knowledge and the appropriateness of methodologies for the social sciences. Patton has argued strongly against the dominance of the quantitative/ experimental para-

digm in the area of evaluation. While he has not dismissed the paradigm, he has implied that the alternative qualitative/naturalistic paradigm has a lot to offer in terms of answering questions that cannot be addressed by a ‘scientific’ paradigm borrowed from the natural sciences. This chapter provides a good starting point for evaluators to understand the philosophical underpinning of the methodologies they use and is recommended to social researchers to appreciate the significance of the assumptions that they bring to their research.

The last two chapters, which constitute Part 4 of the book, have been devoted to discussions of the pressures and hurdles experienced by an evaluator in the course of performing his duties. Patton has suggested that there are multiple stakeholders who may be affected by the output of an evaluation, and each will try to influence the process to further his own cause. The choices that evaluators have to make to keep the process credible, and not let any particular group take advantage, have been discussed.

This book, like any other, has its strengths and weaknesses. A major strength of the book is the credibility of the author. The author has strong academic credentials (he was a faculty member at the University of Minnesota for 18 years), a strong consulting background, and is active in professional bodies. He was President of the American Evaluation Association. The book, in its current third edition, is abreast of the most recent

developments in the practice and the academic literature in the field. Exhibits that summarise the detailed information have been provided for quick reference as well as very concise 'menus' that can be used as check-lists during evaluation. In other words, although the book is designed as a classroom text, the presentation allows it to be used as a reference book by practitioners when they are actually conducting an evaluation study. Lastly, the book contains cartoons and short Sufi tales (the Sufi tales are induce-ment enough in themselves to read the book!) that emphasise the points of the author and also provide useful humorous breaks that make reading the thick book less laborious.

One of the biggest weaknesses, particularly from the perspective of an Indian reader, is the reliance on North American, mostly US examples and illustrations. Most of the issues discussed do not have a place in the Indian context and readers unfamiliar with the American context may not appreciate many of the critical issues discussed. Though the contents could be generalised it might require some effort to understand their relevance in a different environment. Again, the focus is extensively on the government sector. But, since evaluation of government funded programmes is a dominant concern in the US, the bias is natural in a book whose primary target is the American reader and whose writer is personally involved in several government sector evaluation studies. Finally, the work is primarily a text book which tries to

be academic as well as practitioner oriented. In its attempt to satisfy many segments, it runs the risk of dissatisfying many readers.

Despite its weaknesses, this book could be recommended to the Indian reader. The first segment that can profit from it is the government sector. India has a proliferation of programmes for elimination of poverty, illiteracy and so on, funded by state and central governments, which are rarely, if at all, evaluated to establish their effectiveness. Programmes to promote small size industries or to encourage industrialisation of certain 'under-developed' areas also exist. All such programmes need to be examined to assess whether they are achieving any desirable end or are a waste of public money. This book provides some useful insights into conducting evaluation of government programmes while managing the political pressures that may be associated with any such study. Well managed utilisation-focused evaluation studies could improve the benefits to the intended beneficiaries, and also save the public a lot of money.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation could well benefit the layman or the informed citizen. An understanding of such processes could help people critically examine the functioning of programmes/organisations that have been established to meet their needs and help use the democratic process to ensure their evaluation and improvement.

- Abhoy K Ojha

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Economic Restructuring, Technology Transfer and Human Resource Development

By B R Virmani and Kala Rao

Response Books (a division of Sage Publications), New Delhi,

pp : 288, Price:Rs 395 (Cloth)

The issue of technology transfer has received due attention from academics and the popular press. At one extreme there are visions of mass unemployment as a result of people being made redundant by new technology; a vision which all too often finds its most vigorous proponents among Indian trade unionists. On the other, there is the prospect of technology raising productivity and thereby economic activity which, perhaps with a few minor hiccups, ultimately results in higher living standards. Between these views lies the actual task