Evaluation of prevention programs

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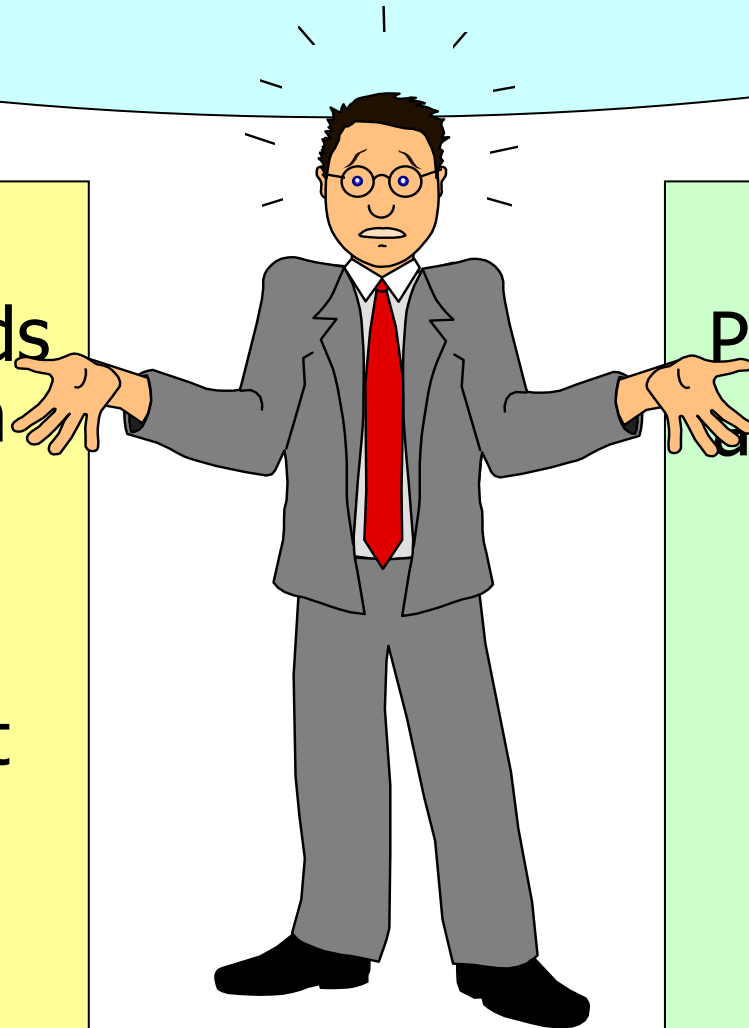# Focus of the presentation

Two basic issues of evaluation:	What is missing?
1. Evaluation questions 2. Evaluation criteria	Methodology of evaluation (data collection methods, data analysis)

Evaluation means troubles

Growing demands to do evaluation of prevention programs
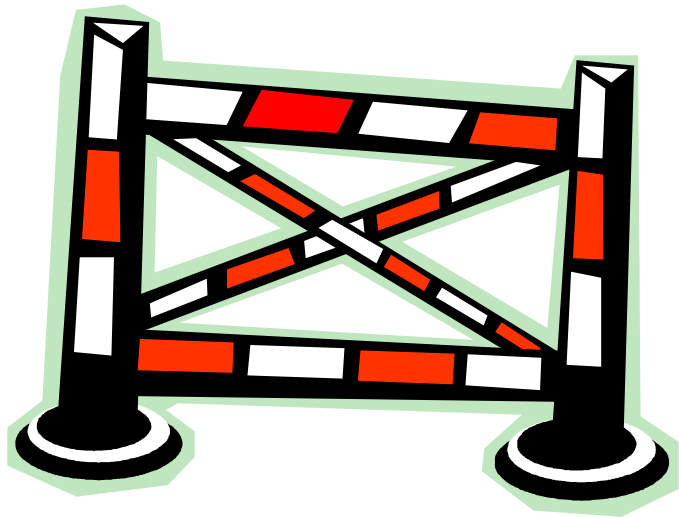- evaluation is required by most funding organizations

Program leaders and practitioners have serious difficulties to use evaluation in everyday practice

What is important

when we communicate with people about the need of evaluation?

- **Barriers**

- **Benefits**

Barriers in evaluation

Psychological

- lack of interests and commitments

- fear of „negative evaluation"

- fear of being controlled

Technical & financial

– limited access to good manuals and ready-to-use instruments

- low level of knowledge on evaluation techniques and procedures

– limited funds (or no funds) available to program managers for evaluation

Benefits: why evaluation is useful?

- To show that you are responsible (get accountability data)
- To demonstrate program strengths and effectiveness
- To improve quality of your work your professional development

- To eliminate negative side effects
- To get money for the next edition of your project
- To get „good practice" certificate and be on the EDDRA data base

Evaluation as an adventure

- Evaluation might be an intellectual adventure with an analytical thinking at the beginning and a suspense at the end

Evaluation answers questions

- D. Hawkins & B. Nederhood (1987) defined evaluation of a prevention program as process of systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data in order to answer **questions** about a program

- **Raising questions (curiosity) is a key issue**

Kinds of evaluation questions

1. **<u>Conceptual or theoretical model questions</u>** (e.g. What kind prevention strategy (strategies) is used? What is the conceptual model of preventing adolescents from early experimentation with drugs?

2. **<u>Effort and process questions</u>** (e.g. How many teachers did we train to use drug prevention materials in their schools?)

3. **<u>Effectiveness questions</u>** (e.g. How effective is our program in preventing early onset of drinking and smoking among pre-adolescents?)

4. **<u>Efficiency questions</u>** (e.g. Which parent recruitment strategy – workshops or a friendly letter with invitation - is more efficient way to bring parents into our program?)

Levels of evaluation distinguished by the kinds of questions

- **Concept evaluation** – explores theoretical model, goals, needs assessment, and links between them (*How beliefs or attitudes or behaviors of participants may change in response to intervention?*)

- **Process evaluation** documents what happened during program implementation (*Was program implemented in the way it was planned?*)

- **Outcome evaluation** tests to what extent program specific goals were attained (*How many young people were prevented from early onset of drinking?*)

- **Efficiency evaluation** compares costs and outcomes of two different interventions (**Which program is more efficient in preventing young peple from early onset of drinking?**)

Evaluation levels

Related methods

- **Concept evaluation**

Program content analysis, historical evaluation,

- **Process evaluation**

Program documentation, observations, participants' feedback

- **Outcome evaluation**

Quasi-experimental design or RCT Instruments, sampling, statistical analysis
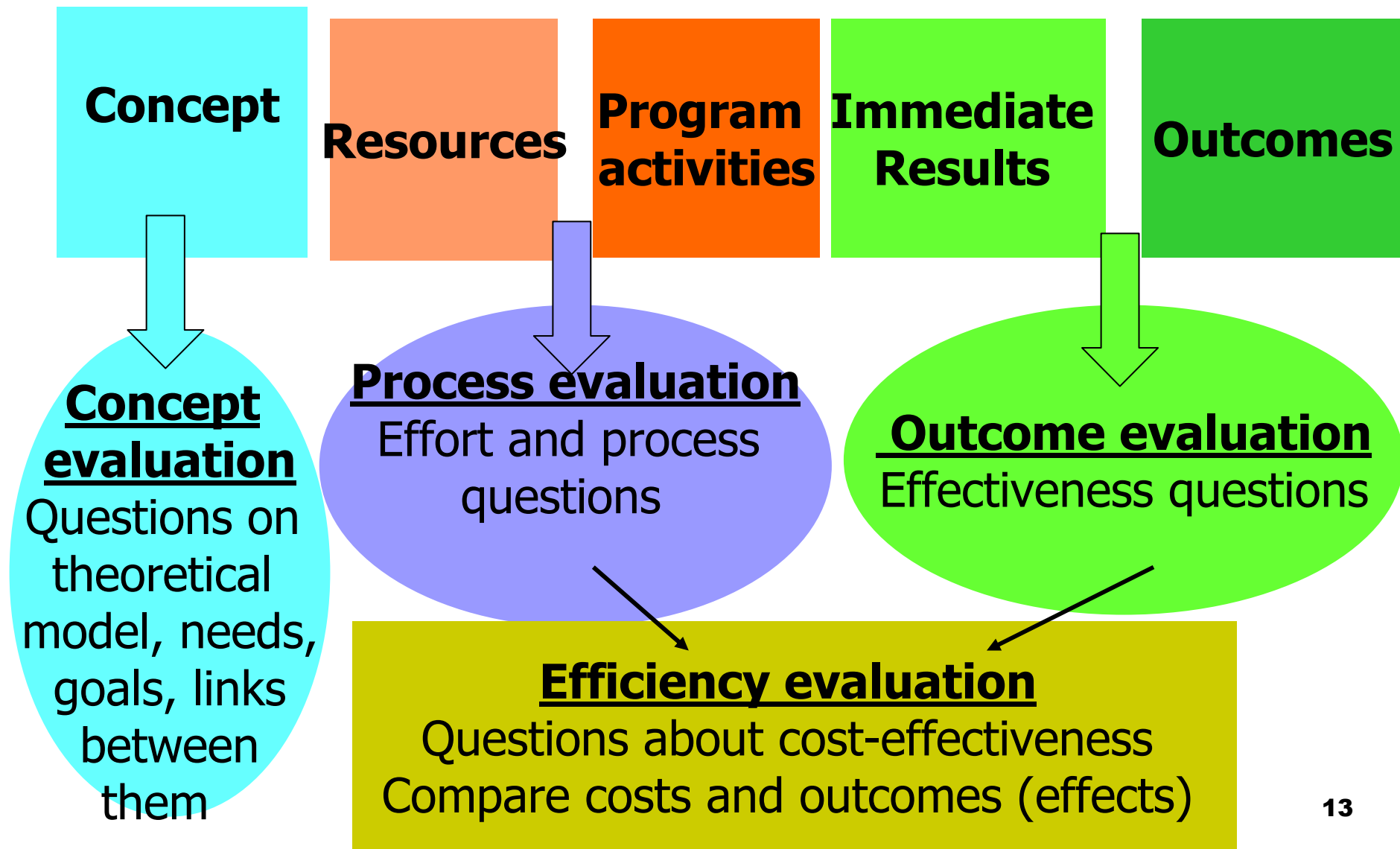
Types of outcome evaluation
(Flay 1986)

Effectiveness studies	**Efficacy studies**
Conducted in real life conditions to assess program effectiveness	Conducted in optimal (best) conditions to evaluate prevention models and strategies

Links between a program model and types of evaluation questions

| Concept | Resources | Program activities | Immediate Results | Outcomes |

Concept evaluation
Questions on theoretical model, needs, goals, links between them

Process evaluation
Effort and process questions

Outcome evaluation
Effectiveness questions

Efficiency evaluation
Questions about cost-effectiveness
Compare costs and outcomes (effects)

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Internal versus external evaluation

Internal evaluation

- Evaluation is a part of the program
- Program staff is responsible for evaluation

External evaluation

- Evaluation is an external activity
- External experts are responsible for evaluation

Evaluation of a school-based drug prevention program BBB

Program BBB consists of 8 teacher-led sessions
Goal is to provide age-appropriate information on alcohol and other drugs, peer pressure and health consequences
To improve communication skills
Methods: small-group activities, presentations, games, lectures for parents
Participants: students (7th graders)

Implementators did internal evaluation and …..

According to their observations:

- Students who were previously passive became active and contributed in classroom activities,

- Students know each other better than before and communicate better with each other,

- Students became more confident with their teachers and more often express their personal problems and ask for support

External experts did evaluation and reporting ….

- Most of the students increased knowledge on substance abuse consequences

- Some students changed their attitudes (and beliefs) towards substance use

- Participation in the BBB program hasn't influenced students' behavior concerning substance use

Two evaluations
of the BBB program

Implementators

- More students' activity

- Class integration

- Better teacher-students communication

External evaluators

- Knowledge increased

- Some attitudes have changed

- No influence on behavior in question (substance use)

???

Good program

Weak program

Important question

How can we explain differences
in the BBB program internal
and external evaluation?

These differences are due to:

- Different evaluation **criteria and questions** used by program implementators and external experts

- Different methods of evaluation:

- Direct observations

  versus

- Quasi-experimental design

What are the criteria?

These are our important expectations and our standards of prevention work

Criteria allow us to recognize whether we succeed or failed

Criteria used in drug prevention

Criteria often used by researchers

- Behavioral e.g. reduction in substance use
- Indirect – modification of attitudes, beliefs or intentions
- Knowledge – changes in knowledge

Criteria often used by implementators

- Teacher-student communication
- Class integration
- Students' (parents) satisfaction
- Active participation

How can we solve the problem of criteria?

Key questions and criteria should be chosen during **the negotiations** between groups of people who are interested in evaluation of the particular prevention program
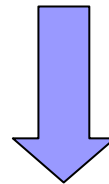
Democratic evaluation (Korporowicz 2001)
or
Realistic evaluation (Hawkins i Nederhood 1994)

Steps to evaluating prevention program

0. Choosing key evaluation questions and criteria

1. Choosing the way to collect information to answer key questions (evaluation design)
2. Designing or choosing instruments
3. Planning how to collect data
4. Collecting data
5. Analysis data
6. Reporting the findings to the identified groups (team, teachers, funders)
7. Making use of evaluation findings

Conclusions

- Evaluation depends on type of key questions and criteria

- Negotiations between people (and institutions) is probably the best way of establishing key questions and criteria for evaluation

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