This unit argues that evaluations should foster improvement, provide accountability records, and promote increased understanding of the phenomena under review; it argues further that the first of these is paramount. The module explicates the CIPP model for evaluation by describing its development, contrasting it to other approaches, depicting its role in improving programs, explicating its main concepts, and outlining the requirements of a sound evaluation design. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of subjecting one’s evaluation work to evaluation through metaevaluation.

The most important purpose of evaluation is not to prove but to improve. . . . We cannot be sure that our goals are worthy unless we can match them to the needs of the people they are intended to serve.

This unit presents an improvement orientation to program evaluation. Because historical context is useful in understanding any conceptualization of a field of professional practice and because I am aware that my professional background and experiences greatly influenced my own views, I have personalized the presentation. I traced the development of the CIPP model, contrasted it to other approaches, characterized its systems and program-improvement orientation, and described each of its four main types of
evaluation. I also explained my view of what is involved in designing particular evaluations and, in concluding, discussed metaevaluation.

In working through this unit, I suggest that you study its objectives to discern what you can learn from it; then read through the material, complete the knowledge test and application exercises, and check your answers against the keyed ones. Finally, you should find it instructive to address the "Questions Without Answers." I suggest that you discuss them with other students of evaluation and review relevant literature. Pertinent books and articles are listed at the back of the unit.

Objectives

The following are the objectives of this unit.

1. To identify the order in which the author arrived at the concepts of context, input, process, and product evaluation, and explain how this developmental sequence was a response to field-based needs for evaluation.
2. To identify the conditions identified by the PDK Committee as symptomatic of the illness of educational evaluation.
3. To characterize the PDK Committee's objections to definitions that equate evaluation to experimental design, measurement, professional judgments, and comparing outcomes to objectives.
4. To discuss the five problems identified by the PDK Committee as underlying the failure of educational evaluation.
5. To identify and explain the definition of evaluation that is embodied in CIPP evaluation.
6. To identify key similarities and differences between the CIPP model and views of evaluation advanced by Stake and Scriven.
7. To characterize the potential contributions of CIPP evaluations to meeting requirements for accountability.
8. To explain the CIPP model's orientation toward improvement.
9. To characterize the role of CIPP evaluation in the context of an institution's efforts to improve its program.
10. To describe the purpose, methods, and uses, respectively, of context, input, process, and product evaluation.
11. To explain the purpose and procedures of the advocacy-team technique.
12. To describe the author's concept of evaluation design.
13. To define the concept of metaevaluation.