

## Types of evaluation

The model of evaluation to be undertaken will depend on:

- the type of programme which is under investigation – eg is it primarily concerned with embedding broad entrepreneurial skills, as in many school-based programmes, or is it offering practical advice and skills training related to business start-up.
- What do we want to know about the programme? – eg do we want to assess the implementation and delivery of the programme or do we want to measure its impact?

Two types of evaluation are commonly used in the evaluation of education for entrepreneurship programmes:

- **Summative** evaluation focuses on the outputs or outcomes achieved by the programme, and is sometimes called **impact** evaluation. This may be done through assessing the post-programme destinations or behaviour of participants or the cost-effectiveness of programme. It often requires an assessment of what would have happened if the programme had not been in place.
- **Formative** evaluation, or **process** evaluation, assesses the process through which the education for entrepreneurship programmes have been designed and implemented, in order to identify ways in which improvements to how the programme is delivered can be introduced. It can explain how, why, and under what conditions a programme worked, or failed to work. The findings of a formative evaluation process can provide valuable feedback on issues such as the planning and design of courses, as well as aspects of the content and the teaching methods employed. For example, the evaluation may ask whether the programme is fulfilling its objectives and reaching those who were originally identified as intended participants.

Importantly, evaluations can be designed to capture data which will fulfil the requirements for both summative and formative evaluations, as the following examples indicate:

### **Longitudinal evaluation**

The underlying premise of education for entrepreneurship programmes is that they fundamentally change attitudes and mindsets among their participants. However, the timescale involved in such changes cannot be predetermined. For some, it may occur relatively quickly, while for others, the lessons learned may not become apparent for some time. In terms of the evaluation of programmes, this can present a problem as far as the timing of the fieldwork for the evaluation is concerned. Moreover, observable manifestations of impact, as evidenced by entrepreneurial behaviour, may also take a considerable period of time to emerge.

For those who are exposed to education for entrepreneurship programmes during secondary education, and continue into tertiary education before entering the labour market, the time lag between participation in the programme and making career decisions will make it difficult to assess the relevance of inputs from their time at school. Also, the timescales required for the emergence of meaningful data vary considerably between different types of measures.

An acknowledged deficiency in the evidence base for the impact of education for entrepreneurship programmes is the scarcity of longitudinal research. Notwithstanding, these difficulties, it is clear that, wherever resources and timescales permit, longitudinal evaluation offers the prospect of deriving robust findings on which policy-makers may base recommendations and decisions with confidence. Moreover, a longitudinal study enables variables such as commitment and attitudes to entrepreneurship to be measured at the outset, with shifts in these attitudes being measured over time.

### ***Post-course evaluations***

Quantitative data are most frequently collected and evaluations are often carried out in the form of a **post programme** or activity evaluation form. These typically seek information on:

- participant's level of satisfaction with aspects of the programme;
- changes in attitudes;
- knowledge about the areas covered in the programme; and
- perceptions about skills development.

This may be derived from: those designing the programme; teachers or providers; and participants.

In some cases, evaluation of education for entrepreneurship programmes is conducted solely by assessing the views and experience of the teachers or business partners involved in the programme and does not ask students about their experience.