

# Declaration

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This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project entitled Investigating the Evaluation Performance of an Educational Programme Conducted in Yunnan Province China is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Education.

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- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

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# **Investigating the Evaluation Performance of an Educational Programme Conducted in Yunnan Province China**

Han Zhang

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

Unitec Institute of Technology, 2008

## **ABSTRACT**

Motivated by a desire for caring and developing, non-government organisations (NGO) have established and operated programmes of education, health, social welfare and economic improvement in both developed and developing countries, including China. There is an increasing awareness in the Chinese context that project management skills play a crucial role in making a project successful in NGOs. In NGOs' project management oversight, the evaluations are constantly required. Hence, this research is designed to investigate the evaluation performance of a typical NGO's educational programme in Dali, Lincang, and Simao Prefectures. The study listens to the voices of the project management people in relation to the project evaluation performance using interviews and questionnaires. And it also examines the documents about the requirements of the project evaluation. The study compares the intention data and action data to identify the current project evaluation performance.

The findings show that the current project evaluation system was developed by the project staff in practical work. The implementation of project evaluation procedures was passive. the project management skills of employed personnel could not keep abreast of the project development. The evaluation methods and information usage were neither multiple or effective. Moreover, the management problems of the organisation also endangered the possibility of high quality project evaluation performance. The study concludes that project evaluation should receive more emphasis and attention in future, and recommends that more evaluation skills and funds should be allocated to the project evaluation. The project should use multiple evaluation methods, and comprehensively use the information collected in evaluations. Furthermore, the participation of the project beneficiaries in the project evaluations should be strengthened in future.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

During the research period, there are a number of people who gave excellent support and mentoring to help me complete my thesis successfully.

Firstly, I owe special gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Carol Cardno. This thesis would not have been possible without her constant support, assistance, and guidance.

With profound sense of appreciation, I acknowledge the constructive suggestions as well as the expert guidance extended towards my thesis by the supervisors – Dr. Mary Panko, and Dr. Karen Dobric.

I would like to thank the top management of Save the Children UK China Programme Kunming Office And all the helpful staff in the organisation for giving me the opportunity to conduct my research in their organisation.

I extend my heartfelt thankfulness to my best friend - Ms. Liu Jing who gave me many valuable suggestions, constant support and encouragement for the data translation during the research period.

I also want to say “thank you” to all my friends in Unitec Institute of Technology, especially, Ms. Li Jiao, and Ms Polly Li who made my enjoyable stay here.

Last, but not the least, I must appreciate my parents and my husband for their love and giving me the opportunity to study abroad.

# Table of Contents

	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	i
<b>Acknowledgement</b>	ii
<b>Table of Contents</b>	iii
<b>List of Tables</b>	v
<b>List of Figures</b>	v
<b>Chapter One Introduction</b>	
1.1 Overview of the Research	1
1.2 Research Rationale	1
1.3 Research Aims and Objectives	4
1.4 Research Background	5
1.5 Organisation of Thesis	10
<b>Chapter Two Literature Review</b>	
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Evaluation in Education	12
2.3 Evaluation of Educational Programme of Non-Governmental Organisations	27
2.4 Summary and Rationale for Study	36
<b>Chapter Three Methodology</b>	
3.1 Introduction	38
3.2 Research Methodology	38
3.3 Research Design	40

3.4	Methods Used in Research	41
3.5	Sampling and Respondents	47
3.6	Data Analysis	48
3.7	Validity and Triangulation	51
3.8	Ethical Considerations	53
3.9	Limitations	55

## Chapter Four Research Findings

4.1	Introduction	57
4.2	Findings of Documentary Analysis	57
4.3	Findings of Interviews	73
4.4	Findings of the Questionnaires	89
4.5	Summary	94

## Chapter Five Discussion and Conclusion

5.1	Summary of Findings	97
5.2	Discussion and Implications	100
5.3	Conclusion	106
5.4	Recommendation	107
5.5	Further Research	108

<b>References</b>		109
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<b>Appendix I</b> —Interview Schedule		122
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<b>Appendix II</b> —Survey Questionnaire of IG/VE programme evaluation		124
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## **LIST OF TABLES**

	<b>Page No.</b>
Table 2.1 Comparison of Evaluation Types	18
Table 4.1 Concerns of Current Project Evaluation Performance	88
Table 4.2 Research Consolidated Findings	94

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

	<b>Page No.</b>
Figure 1.1 Map of China's Provinces	7
Figure 1.2 Map of Yunnan Province	7
Figure 1.3 Framework of the IG/VE project	9

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **1. 1 Overview of the Research**

Over the past few decades, Non-Government Organisations (NGO) have dramatically developed in numbers and scales in both developed and developing countries. Ball and Dunn (1995) stated that motivated by a desire for caring and developing, NGOs have established and operated a series of programmes on education, health, social welfare and economic improvement. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of project management skills in making a project successful in NGOs. In NGOs' project management, reporting, monitoring and oversight of the works are required. Hence, this research is designed to look into the evaluation performance of a typical NGO's educational programme. The study investigates the evaluation implementation of a NGO educational programme in China based on the intention and primary data. It listens to the voice of people who are involved in evaluating project performance and examining the documents about the requirements of the project evaluation.

### **1.2 Research Rationale**

In Yunnan Province China, I had worked for an educational programme named as the

Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project (YMBEP) for two years. I left this work at present. This project was run by Save the Children UK China Programme -- an International Non-Government Organisation (INGO). Based on my working experience with Income Generation/Vocational Education (IG/VE) project, I considered that the project evaluation performance (including baseline survey, mid-term review, final review, and formative evaluation activities) lacks rigour. There is a gap between “what the evaluators intended to do” and “what actually occurred”. Reflecting on this problem, I realized that it could compromise the successful outcomes of Save the Children’s educational projects, and that it was worthy of further investigation to see how much of an issue it was in Yunnan Province as a whole. This research focused on *examining intentions and actual practices of the evaluation implementation of some Save the Children’s income generation/vocational education projects*; clarifying and analysing the evaluation practice of current projects, and identifying issues that can complicate and compromise valid and reliable evaluations.

Since the end of the cold war, INGOs have developed enormously in terms of number and scale. Nowadays, they are becoming more and more important in almost every aspect of human need and endeavour (Ball & Dunn, 1995), and to be “the third power” in the world. Such INGOs play important roles in every field all over the world (Yuan, 2007). Many INGOs set up educational programmes in developing countries to support and/or advocate local education development.

These educational programmes established by the INGOs receive funds and donations from stakeholders. For the purpose of this thesis, the term *stakeholder* means political and business organisations and enterprises that provide funds and other hardware support to the NGOs. As Vasconcelos and her colleagues (2002) posed, under the circumstance of NGOs, the term “stake” in the word stakeholder is formed with three types of capital: social capital, intellectual capital and political capital. In the proposals and contracts signed by the NGO and one or more stakeholders, there are

usually descriptions of project evaluation procedures. Take Save the Children UK as an example; the organisation had developed contract guidelines entitled *Grant Contract* (Save the Children China Programme, 2005) for use in projects with the European Union as the stakeholder. In this contract, there were the guidelines which prescribed the principles and procedures of project evaluation for Phase one of YMBEP (Phase one is project pilot phase; phase two is replication phase). Furthermore, in line with Save the Children internal programme evaluation dimensions (Save the Children UK's Global Impact Monitoring Framework, 2004); the organisation has developed a series of project management manuals. Based on my working experiences, some of the project management manuals were out of date and no longer appropriate to practice, especially the projects follow up, feedback, monitoring and information collection.

On the other hand, evidence also suggested that the programme operators lacked sufficient and effective strategies to collect valid feedback to monitor the progress of the project; and lacked effective approaches to evaluate the project based on specific local needs. It appeared that the programme operators paid more attention to preparing work for launching a project than to the work of follow-up and feedback.

Nowadays hundreds of organisations are involved in the education field in many countries and areas. The documents of programme evaluation from the area of health and education fields are less readily available than that of agricultural, environmental and rural development (United Nations Population Fund, 2004). There has been growing literature on the evaluation of the NGO's educational programme performance (Davies, 2001) (e.g. *Books, Buildings, and Learning Outcomes: An Impact Evaluation of World Bank Support to Basic Education in Ghana*, Howard 2004). Makuwira (2004) in a report pointed out that little documentation has been kept by NGOs in education. Further documents suggest that "...The staff in these NGOs lacks skills in policy analysis and advocacy, information backed by empirical evidence" (Council for Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi (CONGOMA,

2000, p.2).

For all such educational programmes carried out by the INGOs, it is vital that the evaluation tools, models and/or methodologies that are used to assess the validity of the programme and monitor its impact and development are effective, systemic and consistent with the requirements from the stakeholders. Good evaluation will enhance the programme work. The organisation might be not fully aware of the evaluation issues. This research will contribute to the awareness of evaluation issues. In this way, the NGOs can improve their programme evaluation work, and better achieve the outcomes they set for the programmes. A report from the NGO Accountability Discussion Series, entitled '*How to Evaluate Project Effectiveness*', pointed out that "Firstly, it is need to connect evaluation with organisational aims and strategy" (One world trust, 2004, p.3). A good evaluation work will make the organisation better understand their intervention and achieve their goals.

This research focused on the sub-projects in Save the Children's educational programme, Income Generation/Vocational Education (IG/VE) in China (which is a component of Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project) as a typical 'set' to investigate the programme evaluation work. It explored tools, models and methodologies, which were used to assess the validity of school and/or community, based IG/VE projects and monitor the impact and development of projects.

### **1.3 Aims and Objectives**

#### **Overall Objective:**

To investigate the evaluation performance of an educational programme conducted by an international non-government organisation in China

**Specific Aim:**

The aim of this study is to examine the intentions and actual practices of the evaluation implementation of projects in Save the Children China Income Generation/Vocational Education programme in Yunnan Province China; to clarify and analyse the evaluation practice of the current projects.

**Research Questions:**

What is the importance of evaluation?

What are the requirements of programme evaluation from the stakeholders?

What are the current evaluation practices of the IG/VE projects?

What is the gap between the intention and actual practice?

**1.4 Background****1.4.1 Save the Children China Programme**

This part gives an introduction and sets a framework of Save the Children organisation and Income Generation/Vocational Education (IG/VE) project for the research. The organisation in which I had worked for over two years is an independent, non-political, non-religious development organisation that serves for children who suffer from poverty, disease, injustice and violence around the world (Save the Children China Programme, 1999). The name of the organisation is Save the Children UK China Program. It is an international non-profit as well as a non-government organisation.

Save the Children UK China Programme is a branch programme located in China. Its duty is to conduct related projects to support the children in remote and poor areas of China. As described in *Terms of Reference for Save the Children (1999)*, the mission of Save the Children is to fight for children's rights, and seeks to deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide. And in the same document, Save the Children poses that they are working for a world:

- ◆ which respects and values each child;
- ◆ which listens to children and learns: and
- ◆ where all children have hope and opportunity.

Save the Children China Programme mainly focuses on the health, education and protection of vulnerable children. At the same time, for the children experiencing disasters and emergencies, Save the Children China Programme also provides immediate and long-term support to protect them as well (Save the Children China Programme, 1999). In education field, the organisation seeks to improve both quality of and access to education in China.

I entered Save the Children organisation as a project translator for Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project (YMBEP). Having been requested by Yunnan Government in the late 1990's, Save the Children UK collaborated with Yunnan Provincial Education Department (YPED) to design, develop and jointly implement a five-year-project (initial plan) which aims at improving the quality of and access to education for those poor, ethnic minority children in the remote areas of Yunnan Province. This Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project (YMBEP) was initiated in 1999 with three major components: teacher training, research and development and Income Generation. Since then, in line with the changes of government policies and practice requirements, the components have changed and expanded. It currently has four major components: teacher training, inclusive education, community participation in education and nutrition and hygiene, and income generation/vocational education (Save the Children China Programme Annual Report, 2004).

## 1.4.2 Income Generation/Vocational Education Project

### 1.4.2.1 Location(s):

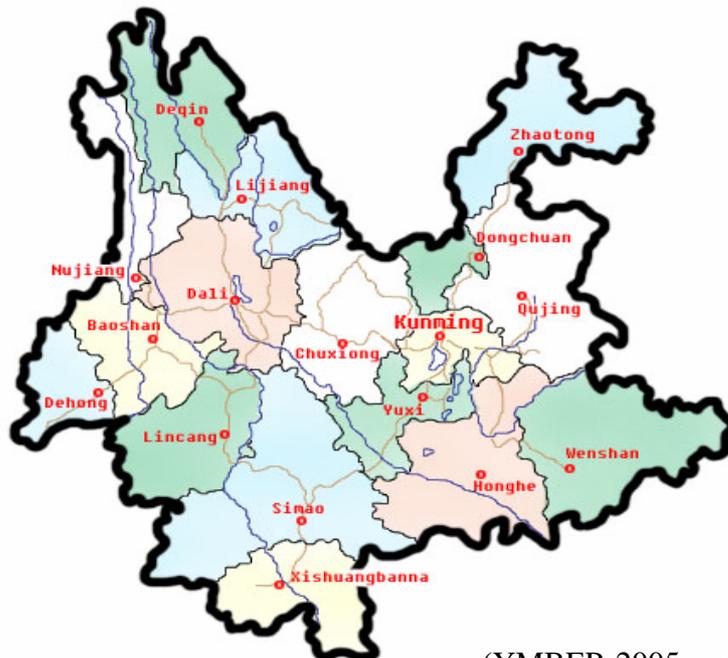
Yunnan Province, the People's Republic of China; specifically 50 poor counties in the 8 Prefectures of Nu Jiang, Wen Shan, Si Mao, Da Li, Li Jiang, Ling Cang, De Hong and Zhao Tong (Please see maps below).

Figure 1.1 Map of China's Provinces



(YMBEP, 2005, p. 2)

Figure 1.2 Map of Yunnan Province



(YMBEP, 2005, p. 3)

#### **1.4.2.2 Introduction of the Income Generation/Vocational Education Project**

During my two-year working period, I had been working for the IG/VE for more than one year as a project assistant. This period of working experience made me to choose the IG/VE Project as the target project for this research study.

When the income generation component of YMBEP was commenced, it consisted of four types of activities: income generation, training and technical support, child/community service and scholarship distribution. Both Save the Children and the local government have provided funds to a number of individual school-based income generation projects in three prefectures: Lincang, Dali and Simao (Planning for the Phase for YMBEP's Income Generation/Nutrition/School Services, 1999). (Note: In China, there are 7 administrative levels. From the sequence of high to low are nation, province, city, prefecture, county, township, and village.)

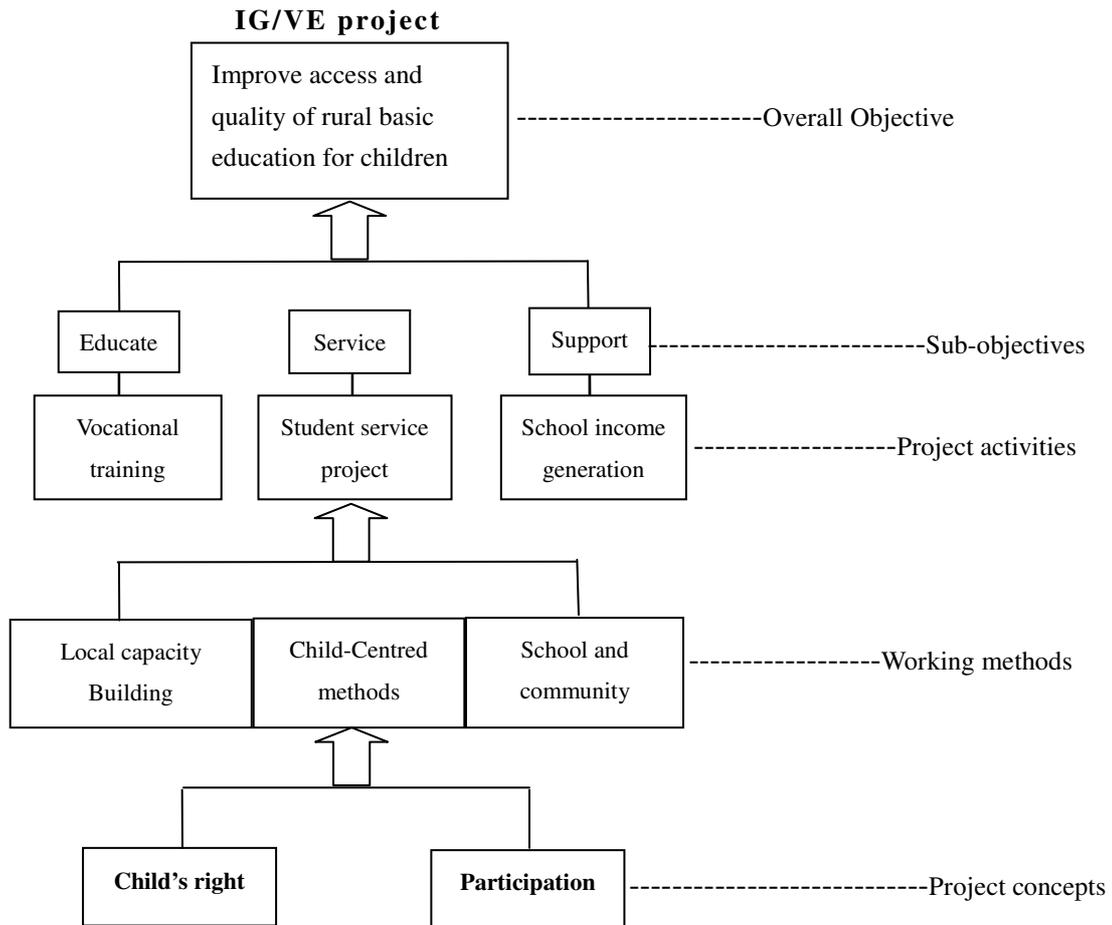
With the development of policies and circumstances, the projects are currently grouped into three classifications, depending upon the areas of focus: income generation (IG) projects; vocational education (VE) projects; and child/community services (services). In 2005, there were sixteen projects focusing on income generation, nine projects focusing on vocational education and eleven projects focusing on services (Income Generating/Vocational Education Projects and YMBEP, 2005). Currently, another fourteen projects focusing on vocational education have been launched.

The focus on scholarship distribution has been reduced over time, and more recently has been eliminated due to the government's introduction of a new educational policy (The Decisions on Further Strengthening Education in Rural Areas, 2006). This policy indicated that, from 2007, all children undertaking their 9 years of compulsory education will enjoy exemptions from incidental school and book fees and will also

receive a subsidy to cover basic living expenses. Since 2008, some of the projects have been transformed into the management of local Education Bureaus.

### 1.4.2.3 Framework of the Income Generation/Vocational Education Project

Figure 1.3 Framework of the IG/VE project



(Su & Xi, 2008, p. 14)

### 1.4.2.4 Working Framework of the Income Generation/Vocational Education Project

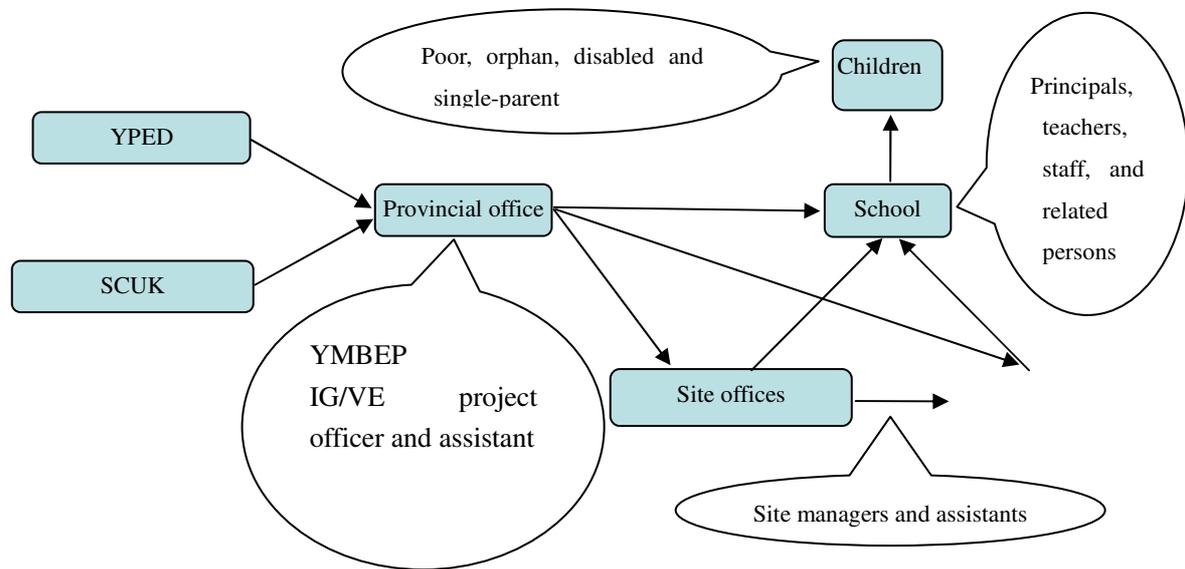
Figure 1.4 Working Framework of the IG/VE project

Note: YPED refers to Yunnan Provincial Education Department

SCUK refers to Save the Children UK organisation

YMBEP refers to Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project

IG/VE refers to Income Generation/Vocational Education project



(Su & Xi, 2008, p. 17)

## 1.5 Organisation of Thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction of the whole research, including the research rational, aim, research questions, and background of the targeted organisation and project.

Chapter two provides the literature review related to this research study. The chapter discusses evaluation literatures concerning about professional education; programme evaluation and non-government organizations' (NGOs) programme evaluation. The rationale of this research study is summarised in this part as well.

Chapter three presents theoretical consideration of the research methodology, including research design, data collection, sampling and respondents, data analysis, validity and triangulation of this research, and ethical considerations. Moreover, based

on the researcher's personal research experience, limitations are illustrated at the end of the chapter.

Chapter four presents the findings in three sections. Findings of documents are followed by findings of interviews and findings of questionnaires. In the first section, findings of documents analysis show the requirements from programme donors, stakeholders, and internal evaluation principles of the organisation. At the same time, documents of programme evaluation reports reveal the current evaluation models and methods. In the second section, based on the interview questions, the information which came from the management levels is analysed to show current Income Generation/Vocational Education (IG/VE) programme evaluation. In the third section, the data from the questionnaires show the views from supervisors of individual projects on the programme evaluation. At the end of the chapter, a summary of consolidated findings is presented.

Chapter five presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations. The section of discussion and implication of the research is based on the research questions. Then, the conclusions and recommendations are provided based on the discussion and implications. At the end of this chapter, the writer throws some light on future research opportunities.

# Chapter Two

## Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the topic, aim, rationale, research questions and context of this research project. This chapter will focus on the literature related to this research project. The literature is going to discuss: evaluation literature in professional education field; literature in programme evaluation and that related to the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). At the end of the chapter, a summery will be given.

### 2.2 Evaluation in Education

#### 2.2.1 Definition of Evaluation

There are several concepts related to the notion of evaluation. They might be value, merit, development, criteria, standards, aims, objectives, requirements, validity, practical significance, improvement, process, impact, formative, summative, collected information etc. The Merriam-Webster's Dictionary (2004) gives the etymology of the term evaluation. It was from French *évaluation*, from Middle French *evaluacion*, from *esvaluer* to evaluate, from *e-* + *value* value in 1842. The dictionary defines as: 1. to determine or fix the value of; 2. to determine the significance, worth, or condition of usually by careful appraisal and study. Moreover, in the *Oxford Advanced English*

*Dictionary* (Hornby, 1997, p.67), the term “evaluate” has been defined as: “find out or form an idea of the amount or value of somebody or something”, and “evaluation” is nominal. The term evaluation is usually used with the term assessment (Chen YuKun, 2003).

However, evaluators in the education field define it in another way. Worthen et al. (1997) pointed out that different evaluators who believe in varied theories use the term in disparate ways. In other word, there is no agreed-on definition in professional field. Hence, different understanding of the evaluation leads to various types of evaluation practices. Worthen and his colleagues preferred to widely define the evaluation “as judging the worth or merit of something” which were posed by Scriven (1967). Most of the definitions of the term evaluation involve in these keywords: answering specific questions; research or measurement; collecting information; examining the extent; judgments; progress for decision-making; quality controlling etc.. For instance, politically comparing it to research, some people noted that (the evaluation is) “the provision of information about specified issues upon which judgments are based and from which decisions for action are taken” (Morrison, 1993:2). And MacDonald also said that evaluation is “an inherently political enterprise” in 1987.

Popham (1998, p. 5) defined evaluation as “a formal appraisal of the quality of educational phenomena”, which leads to two more concepts for readers to define – “formal appraisal” and “quality”. Cronbach had stated a more aborative definition in 1963. He defined evaluation as the “collection and use of information to make decisions about an educational programme” (Cronbach, 1963, p. 8). He believed in that only the extensive information collected in actual classroom environment can give the directions of whether the programme was successful or failed, and how to improve the programme. Decision-making should base on the actual information, not imagine or suppose about how an educational programme can be successful. Furthermore, Beeby provided us another more extended definition: “the systematic collection and interpretation of evidence, leading, as part of the process, to a judgment of value with a view to action” (Beeby, 1978, p. 12). Among the various definition of the term evaluation, the researcher intends to agree with the one from Worthen and his colleagues’. They simply but essentially described evaluation as “determining the

worth or merit of an evaluation object (whatever is evaluated)” (Worthen & Sanders & Fitzpatrick, 1997).

Evaluation uses inquiry and judgment methods, including (1) determining standards for judging quality and deciding whether those standards should be relative or absolute, (2) collecting relevant information, and (3) applying the standards to determine value, quality, utility, effectiveness, or significance. It leads to recommendations, intended to optimize the evaluation object in relation to its intended purpose(s). (Worthen et al.; 1997, p. 5)

Educational evaluation is intended to lead to policies and practices improvement in education field. Thus, it absolutely is “decision-oriented” and “conclusion-oriented” (Cronbach & Suppes, 1969).

### **2.2.2 Purpose of Evaluation**

White (2002) suggested that the purpose of the evaluation is to provide a basis of decision making. Different from assessment, the evaluation involves the valuation in the work; hence, it may be recorded for the purpose of reporting. Morrison (1993) emphasized instruction as the purpose of the evaluation. He described that the evaluation “is used for the purpose of making judgments about the worth or success of people or things” (p. 240). Phillips (1997) asserted that “there must be a comprehensive measurement and evaluation process to capture the contribution of human resource development” (p. 1). He addressed the purpose of the evaluation as determining satisfaction of participants and managers (including immediate, senior and top executives). In contrast to those who considered the evaluation as a process of providing information to decision making, Kaufman et al. (2006) argued that the purpose of the evaluation is to compare results with intentions.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) (1996), the purpose of the evaluation is to analyse the process of the implementation and the impact or changes; and then identify problems and important lessons for

improving future projects. The organisation Health Canada (2005) suggested that the purposes of the evaluation are to understand the impact of a program and its components on clients, families, and the community; to improve the delivery of services so as to improve quality and spending of resources; and to confirm the action that conforms to the intention. Similarly, a British organisation Welsh Assembly Government (2007) summarized the purpose of the evaluation as demonstrating performance, discovering where improvements could be made to design or delivery methods, identifying good practice and lessons for the future. Gosling and Edwards (1995) also described the purposes of monitoring and review for a programme as validating whether specific objectives has been achieved; identifying the impacts on different beneficiaries of the programme; and working out the improving way of the programme. They emphasized that it is significant to discover and understand the success and failure.

In an evaluation, there can be many different purposes according to the practical requirements. The purpose of an evaluation exercise should be clear before starting. Brophy (2007) summarised that the possible purposes are to increase understanding of user needs; to fulfil requirements for accountability; to determine whether processes are working correctly; to check whether a product conforms to specification; to judge the effectiveness of a project; to assess the outcomes of the project (the impact). The purpose of the evaluation reflects the importance of the evaluation in all areas. As Scriven (1991) said, the evaluation “is the process whose duty is the systematic and objective determination of merit, worth, or value. Without such a process, there is no way to distinguish the worthwhile from the worthless.” (p.4)

### **2.2.3 Evaluation Characteristics**

The evaluation may refer to a wide range of activities based on varied evaluators’ assumptions of the term. However, it has some characteristics in the educational field,

especially different from research. Nuttall (1982) listed a scheme described the necessary components of the evaluation as the following:

- ◆ be fair and perceived as fair by all the parties involved;
- ◆ be capable of suggesting appropriate remedies;
- ◆ yield an account that is intelligible to its intended audience(s);
- ◆ be methodologically sound;
- ◆ be economical in its use of resources;
- ◆ be an acceptable blend of centralized and delegated control.

(Open University, 1982, p.30)

The scheme summarised what might be expected in a process of an evaluation generally. From the factors, Aspinwall and his colleagues (1992) abstracted three key characteristics of evaluation which are more clear and easy to understand:

- ◆ Evaluation involves making judgements.
- ◆ Evaluation is, at best, open and explicit.
- ◆ Evaluation contributes to decision-making.

(Aspinwall & Smikins & Wildinson, 1992, p.4)

First of all, *evaluation involves making judgements*, is gained based on the objective and definition of the term. It is the motivation of the inquirer (Norris, 1990). Evaluation is to make judgements on the worth or value of an activity or a programme or an issue. To reach the judgements, evaluators need to set criteria, standards, values which can be applied to reflect success. Sometimes, the values and criteria can be similar or shared (Aspinwall et al. 1992). However, in some cases, the setting of criteria might lack sufficient thought, which results in a failure to recognize the successes of the issue. Thus, Aspinwall and her colleagues state that it is important to confirm the successes of the issue with the improvement. For the processing of making judgements, another important factor is the evaluator. The values of evaluators greatly influence the perspective of what to be evaluated and how to do. The central purpose of an evaluation is most significant for the evaluator to make judgements. Morrison (1993) regards “making judgements” as one of the

characteristics of evaluation. Norris (1990) suggests that evaluation can be viewed as an extension of research. Based on this statement, Glass (1987) offers the use of the two studies. He considers research as to further knowledge; while evaluation is used to inform decisions.

Secondly, the *evaluation should be open and explicit*, it does not mean that every piece of data collected in evaluation should be accessed by public (Aspinwall et al. 1992). It is a characteristic of evaluation process. Commonly, a decision resulted in an evaluation influences future funding and work chance. Thus participants of evaluation often try to avoid core questions that can lead to changes, and put on a good face. In the process of the evaluation, Aspinwall et al. (1992) suggested that more than conclusions and recommendations, who has participated, what happened, what criteria used and how to design should be open and clear to the intended audiences and participants. The evaluation is multi-level, thus different actions are suitable for various situations. Compared with the research, Norris (1990) states that the important criteria which refer to internal and external validity are applied to judge research adequacy; while for the evaluation, they are utility and credibility. The credibility of an evaluation is established by the characteristics described as open and explicit.

Finally, the evaluation should *contribute to decision making*. It is the objectives characteristic of the study. The people who are doing the research are not responsible for ensuring the happening of changes which are caused by what have been found in the study. However, evaluators usually involve in a formal or informal planning cycle. For a working cycle, their findings often lead to decision making and changes, such as re-allocation of resources (Aspinwall et al. 1992). The research is the study of advanced frontiers of knowledge (Glass, 1987). In this way, it can meet the needs of curiosity and seek conclusions (Norris, 1990). For evaluation, Norris (1990) described it as being undertaken to contribute to the solution of a problem and lead to decisions.

## 2.2.4 Types and Models of Evaluation

Generally, there are two types of evaluation which were distinguished by Scriven in 1967. They are formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation usually refers to monitoring; while summative one is review. From then, this distinction was accepted by the world. The monitoring is conducted to evaluate the progress of a programme, and provide evaluative information for the programme staff to make improvement. Whereas the review is conducted to judge the worth or merit of the programme in relation to settled criteria, and provide judge information for the decision makers and/or potential customers (Worthen et al., 1997). The descriptions of the two types reveal 4 key points: (1) timing – the formative evaluation is to evaluate the progress of the programme, thus it is usually carried out during the programme period; in contrast, the summative evaluation is to judge the merit of the programme, thus it is often conducted at the end the programme. (2) types of information – the formative evaluation provide evaluative information; while the summative one supplies judge information. (3) audiences – the audience in the formative evaluation is the programme personnel, such as people who are in charge of developing, implementing, designing and running the programme; however, the audiences of the summative evaluation may include potential consumers (the related public and/or programme beneficiaries), funding sources (taxpayers or funding agencies), managers, other officials, and programme staff as well. (4) purpose – the formative evaluation aims to improve or modify; and the summative evaluation is to judge the merit for decision making. A more detailed comparison of the formative and the summative evaluation is provided by Worthen and his colleague (1997:17) as the following:

**Table 1: Comparison of Evaluation Types**

	<b>Formative Evaluation</b>	<b>Summative Evaluation</b>
Purpose	To determine value or quality	To determine value or quality
Use	To improve the program	To make decisions about the

		program's future or adoption
Audience	Program administrators and staff	Program administrators and/or potential consumer or funding agency
By whom	Primarily internal evaluators, supported by external evaluators	External evaluators, supported by internal evaluators in unique cases
Major characteristics	Provides feedback so program personnel can improve it	Provides information to enable program personnel to decide whether to continue it, or consumers to adopt it
Design constraints	What information is needed? When?	What evidence I needed for major decisions?
Purpose of data collection	Diagnostic	Judgmental
Measures	Sometimes informal	Valid and reliable
Frequency of data collection	Frequent	Infrequent
Sample size	Often small	Usually large
Questions asked	What is working? What needs to be improved? How can it be improved?	What results occur? With whom? Under what conditions? With what training? At what cost?

(Worthen et al., 1997:17)

However, in practice, it is not simple as showed as above to distinguish the types of evaluation. Because the two are often “profoundly intertwined” (Scriven, 1991). Some evaluators, such as Chen (1996), have argued that it was not sufficient to distinguish the evaluation into two types. But Scriven (1996) replied that the dichotomy is adequate to capture all of the basic functions of the evaluation.

In the comparison table above, from the column of “By whom”, we can draw out another distinction of the evaluation – internal and external. The internal evaluation refers to the evaluations conducted by programme personnel; and the external evaluation is conducted by outsiders (Worthen et al., 1997). Compared with the external evaluator, the internal one definitely knows more about the programme, such as the background and the personal relationship. It is the advantage for the internal evaluation; however, it is also the disadvantage as the internal evaluator may not be objective enough. On the other hand, the external evaluator may access less information than that internal evaluator can get, but he or she can reach more of the importance objectively. Usually, the internal evaluator is so close to the programme that he or she may “temper evaluation recommendations” (Worthen et al., 1997). The external evaluator who is independent from the programme financially and administratively, and can give more credibility of the evaluation. On the other hand, if the external evaluator is selected for friendship or favour, it may affect the evaluation result greatly (Scriven, 1993). Furthermore, Scriven (1993) noted that the external evaluator may want to satisfy their clients to get “additional business from them” in the future. And what can make clients happy – good news. Thus, even the outsider may “direct conflicts of interest” (1993, p. 84). Usually, for an organisation and/or a programme, the most common and useful evaluation method is the combinations of internal-formative and external - summative.

Besides the distinguishing described above, the evaluation can be labelled as different models as well. Wolf (1990) stated that different the purposes of evaluation decide which parts of the evaluation will receive more emphasis. The Questions/Methods-Oriented Evaluation Model focuses on answering specific pointed questions. This model does not widely assess the merit and the worth of the issue, but pay more attention to give answers in some preferred methods. Evaluators name such approach as a Quasi-Evaluation model (Stufflebeam et al., 2000).

The second group of evaluation models is labelled as Improvement/Accountability-Oriented Evaluation Model. This kind of evaluation seeks to comprehensively assess the merit and worth of the evaluated issue. With the multiple qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, evaluator will check the issue across-the-board, and work out broad-based improvement findings (Stufflebeam et al., 2000).

Another set of evaluation is labelled as Social Agenda-Directed (Advocacy) Model. This model emphasizes on the engagement of the perspectives from stakeholders, experts and underprivileged groups in the process of checking and judging a programme. However, in order to meet social objectives, evaluators may “compromise the independent, impartial perspective needed to produce valid findings” (Stufflebeam et al., 2000, p. 341) in some extreme examples. Hence, it is very important to control the “fine line” in relation to the objectivity.

### **2.2.5 Differences Between Evaluation, Measurement, Research, and Learner Appraisal**

Back to the conception of the evaluation, it is important to recognise the differences between evaluation itself and other activities which are usually related to it. Because as we know what it is, we also need to know what it is not (Wolf, 1990). Three activities are often linked to the evaluation: measurement, research, and learner appraisal.

#### **Evaluation and Measurement**

Measurement is the physical measuring act or process. The result of the measurement is the physical properties of the measured issue, for instance, length and weight. There is no judgment of any implying of the value or the merit of the issue (Wolf, 1990). Hence, in scientific domain, the measurement examines the physical terms such as extent, dimension, attitudes and reasons etc. Compared with the measurement, the objective of the evaluation is to place the value on what is being measured. The

findings from the evaluation should be the educational values, such as achievements, self-esteem and related prized outcomes.

Furthermore, the approaches used in the two types of activities are different. Because the measurement aims to seek out the extent, for example, it needs to compare individuals to some preferred features or criteria. In contrast, the interest of the evaluation is to find out the effectiveness of an issue and/or a programme, thus it does not need such comparison. In other word, in the evaluation, the evaluated objects need not to respond to same tasks which regard to some settled criteria. The evaluation and the measurement are “directed toward different ends: evaluation toward describing effects of treatments; measurement toward description and comparison of individuals” (Wolf, 1990, p. 7).

### **Evaluation and Research**

The evaluation and the research are always linked. However, at the same time, they are different from each other. They share several same methodological characteristics (Cohen et al., 2007). And a branch of the research is evaluative research. Both researchers and evaluators conduct similar activities: propose questions, select samples, collect information, examine variables, analyse data, and pose conclusions. Thus to some extent, Norris (1990) argues that the evaluation can be viewed as an extension of the research.

However, there are still important differences between the evaluation and the research. As defined by Beeby (1978), the evaluation is “with a view to action”. It provides a reference for practical decisions, while the research aims at producing new knowledge (Wolf, 1990). The basic distinction between the two activities is the generalizability of results. In other word, Campbell and Stanley (1963) described it as “external validity”. The results from the research usually can be applied to general situation in a broad geographical area and be true in several years. In contrast, the findings from the

evaluation are often applied to a specific programme and/or an issue in a certain dimension, and on the point to the time (Wolf, 1990). Furthermore, Wolf stated that there are differences of the methods used in the two types of activities. For the research, there are well-developed procedures and principles to follow. And in the evaluation, even some evaluators may apply classical research methods as a guide, it is not necessary to follow them in the meaningful evaluations. Glass (1987) summarized several significant differences between them:

1. The intents and purposes of the investigation:  
The research wants to advance the frontiers of knowledge of phenomena, to contribute to theory and to be able to make generalizations. Evaluation is more parochial than universal.
2. The scope of the investigation:  
Evaluation studies tend to be more comprehensive than research in the number and a variety of aspects of a programme that is being studied.
3. Values in the investigation:  
Research aspires to value neutrality; evaluations must represent multiple sets of values.
4. The origins of the study:  
Research has its origins and motivation in the researcher's curiosity and desire to know. ...Whereas the evaluator is motivated by the need to solve problems, allocate resources and make decisions. Research is public; evaluation is for a restricted audience.
5. The uses of the study:  
Research is used to further knowledge; evaluation is used to inform decisions.
6. The timeliness of the study:  
Evaluator's time scales are given; researchers' time scales need not to be given.
7. Criteria for judging the study:  
Evaluations are judged by the criteria of utility and credibility; research is judged methodologically and by the contribution that it makes to the field.

(Glass 1987, p. 33-34)

## **Evaluation and Learner Appraisal**

In educational evaluation, learners' achievement is an important indicator for the results. However, the evaluation is different from the learner appraisal. The learner

appraisal is similar to the activity of measurement which does not involve judgment of value. Examining the learning outcomes is supposed to be teachers' responsibility. If a teacher appraises learners based on the results from an evaluation, he or she will find it useless completely.

### **2.2.6 Framework of Educational Evaluation**

A framework of educational evaluation is helpful in planning and conducting the evaluation activities. In constructing a framework of evaluation, it is important to make clear that it is not an inclusive model. As different evaluators may be directed by various understandings and objectives, the parts of the framework will receive more attention. When one evaluates a set of issues, there are mainly five groups of information needed to be collected (Wolf, 1990).

#### *Information of Initial Status of Learners*

The purpose of the programme is to develop, change and improve. And evaluation aims at finding out whether it has been developed, changed and improved, and how. Thus it is essential for evaluator to collect initial situation of the objects to make conclusion. The collection of initial status information is also known as base-line information. This group of information includes two subclasses: background information of learners, such as age, sex, experience etc.; and the extent of proficiency of the learners. The latter one is more significant for the evaluation, because it may directly determine the authenticity of the result. Evaluator must make sure that the effectiveness of the programme is examined independently.

#### *Information of Learner Performance after a Period of Instruction*

The second group of information required in an evaluation is the status of learner performance after a period of instruction. The evaluation studies are to judge whether the objects are developed, changed and improved as expected after the treatment. The

change usually involves the increase of knowledge, ability of problem-solving, ability of dealing with issues in certain field, attitudes changing, and increase of proficiencies etc. Such information can directly reflect whether the treatment has happened and to what extent. It is not necessary to gather this type of information at the end of the programme. According to different purposes of the evaluation, the schedule of information collection should be varied.

### *Information of Treatment Execution*

The third group of information needed to be collected in evaluation is about the implementation of the treatment. In an evaluation, treatment is the centre of a programme, a course, or an institutional setting. As a responsible evaluator, one should determine whether the designed treatment has been executed. If it has been executed indeed, the next question is to what extent. It seems the information in this group is insignificant, but they are the base of the whole setting and the whole evaluation study. It is critical to find out the information such as whether the instruction started on time, whether the resource has been allocated properly, and whether the treatment has followed the plan. And such information usually requires evaluators using observing procedures and summarizing descriptive documents. Wolf suggested that “one of the evaluation worker’s responsibilities is to describe and compare the intended programme, the implemented or actual programme, and the achieved programme” (1990, p. 27).

### *Costs Information*

Generally, the information of costs needs more attention in evaluation studies. The evaluation aims to conduct practical decision as discussed. In order to make intelligent and practical judgment on educational treatment, the audiences of the evaluation as well as the evaluator need such information. The cost should include direct and indirect costs. An evaluation that fails to give any reference to the costs is meaningless

in practice, and thus no value. It is necessary to take information of costs into consideration at the beginning of the evaluation, and keep adjusting according to the situation. The evaluation requires the collection of all related information. Cost is a significant part of related information, and sometimes is crucial.

### *Supplemental Information*

The last group of information constructing the evaluation framework is supplemental information. This kind of information is mainly used to provide supportive and supplemental views about the influence of the setting. It may include attitudes, ideas, and responses from learners, teachers, and others involved in the setting. Such information is helpful to find out how various groups of people view the treatment. And usually evaluators use questionnaire and interview methods to collect such information. This group of information may also include the situation of learners' proficiency which is not regarded as the selected outcomes. Furthermore, it is important to collect information about the side influence of educational settings.

This framework provided by Wolf (1990) binds the information that needs to be collected in the evaluation. On the other hand, Cohen et al. (2007) summarized the implement process of the evaluation as the following:

- (1) first of all, clarify the purpose;
- (2) choose appropriate methodologies;
- (3) choose approaches to collect data;
- (4) decide the samples of the evaluation;
- (5) conduct evaluation with addressing of ethical issues, reliability and validity;
- (6) choose appropriate techniques to analyse data;
- (7) interpret findings and results, and then report.

Combining the framework from Wolf and the process from Cohen and his colleagues, the implementation of an evaluation can be clearly gained. Evaluation is a

comprehensive topic. It has developed and changed for decades. Compared with the research, it pays more attention to the practice and a smaller scope. In the field of education, it plays an important role not only in educational cycle but also educational programmes and activities.

## **2.3 Evaluation of Educational Programme of Non-Governmental Organisations**

### **2.3.1 Brief Overview of Educational Programme Evaluation**

Educational programme evaluation as an extension of the evaluation method has developed for at least 150 years (Madaus & Stufflebeam, 2000). For the history of the programme evaluation, Madaus and Stufflebeam divided the phases of development into seven periods. However, other researchers such as Worthen and his colleagues viewed it in different way. They (1997) summarized five periods. Nevertheless, nowadays, the programme evaluation in the educational, public, non-profit and private fields is developed from the late adolescent years (Conner, Altman & Jackson, 1984). The history experienced emergency, developing, reforming, being influenced and tested, professionalizing, expanding and integrating to be the current professional system.

As a young professional field, the programme evaluation is troubled by diverse definitions and implementation choices (Worthen et al., 1997). In 1971, Thorndike described the principal purpose of the programme evaluation as producing information to guide decision making with a concern of adoption or modification of the programme. However, Stufflebeam and his colleagues (2000) argued this statement. They proposed different expected purposes of the programme evaluation as the following:

- ◆ to document events,
- ◆ to record student change,
- ◆ to detect institutional vitality,
- ◆ to place the blame for trouble,
- ◆ to aid administrative decision making,
- ◆ to facilitate corrective action,
- ◆ to increase our understanding of teaching and learning.

(Stufflebeam et al., 2000, p. 348)

Each purpose concerns different values of the programme, and leads to various evaluation studies. Based on different purposes, different data is demanded. Stufflebeam et al. (2000) suggest that the evaluator must decide prime attention according to his situation and the purpose. The evaluator can depend on his preconceptions, or on the formal plans and the programme objective, or on specific programme activities, or on the reactions of the programme participants. From the viewpoint of Worthen and his colleagues (1997), choosing programme evaluation models mainly depends on the evaluators' different conceptions and definitions of the evaluation. (1) If one views evaluation as professional judgment, the programme worth should be assessed by the evaluation client. The evaluator will observe the programme in practice; examine the materials about the programme; or apply some other methods to collect sufficient data to reflect considered judgements. (2) If one views it as a comparison between performance indicators and the programme objectives, the evaluator should establish objectives and relevant behaviours would be recorded and measured against them. The standardized or evaluator-constructed instruments will be implemented in this case. (3) A decision-oriented approach refers to the evaluator works closely with the decision maker; and collects sufficient data on programme advantages and disadvantages of each potential decision to make a judgment on the best one. In this case, evaluator and decision maker would share the role of making judgment on the worth of each decision. (4) If inquiry and judgment methods are used, the evaluator should firstly identify the goals of the programme; then use input from relevant reference groups; determine whether the goals are good or bad for the served groups. Then collect information related to the goals and the

programme influence. After analysing and interpreting the information, the evaluator would judge the worth of the programme and often give suggestions for final decision.

### **2.3.2 Educational Programme Evaluation of Non-Governmental Organizations**

The preceding review suggests that evaluative research is one branch of research. The task of such evaluative research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of a policy or a programme. This research is a study on the evaluation of an educational programme which is developed and carried out by an International Non-Government Organization (INGO) in China. Thus literature about the term INGO and the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) programme evaluations will be discussed.

#### **2.3.2.1 Overview of Non-Government Organisations**

Over the past few decades, NGOs have developed dramatically in number and scale in both developed and developing countries. Before understanding the term INGO, it is better to understand the term of NGO. NGO refers to an organisation which is legally established by private people or organisations (Yuan, 2007). In such organisations, there is no participation or representation from any government. For the NGOs which are funded by governments partly or completely, the operation, the management and the decision-making maintain in a non-governmental status as the membership in the organisation does not include government representatives (Yuan, 2007). Davies (2001) pointed out that enormous amounts of public funds have been spent on NGOs; and the amount of development aid has also increased dramatically. Across countries and areas, the size of the NGOs' sectors varied greatly. Currently, the estimated number of internationally operating NGOs is 40000 (Anheier et al., 2001). The numbers of NGOs on each national level are even higher. There are 277000 NGOs in Russia (see <http://www.chicagotribune.com>), and between 1 million and 2 million in India (see

<http://www.indianngos.com/ngosection.htm>). The United Nations Development Programme estimated that the total population who has been reached by NGOs in developing countries all over the world is 250 million which takes 20 percent of the total number of people who are living in poverty in developing countries (Ball & Dunn, 1995).

Motivated by a desire for caring and developing, NGOs have established and operated programmes of education, health, social welfare and economic improvement, especially focusing on disadvantaged groups and areas (Ball & Dunn, 1995). The history of NGOs can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century (Yuan, 2007). They played important roles in anti-slavery movement and reached a top in the World Disarmament Conference (Davies & Richard, 2007). In 1950, 288 (X) of *Charter of The United Nations* gave a definition of the “international Non-Government Organisation” for the first time. The article defined it as: “any international organisation that is not founded by an international treaty” (1950). After the end of Cold War, the globalisation gave the rise of NGOs. Nowadays, NGOs has become to be the “tertiary power” in the world, and are playing vital roles in the international affairs (Yuan, 2007).

Generally INGOs refer to the organisations whose funds come from two countries or more. According to a common standard, INGOs can be divided into operational and advocacy (World Bank, 2007). The purpose of the operational one is to design, implement and develop related programme; and the advocating one is to advocate and promote a certain thematic project. On the other hand, based on the scale and the area, NGOs can be divided into international, district and national. Whereas based on economic location and politics, they are divided into northern developed country and southern developing country (Yuan, 2007). They usually adopt following methods to advocate national policy making: advocating new idea, arousing public awareness of problems, informing information, affecting public opinion, organising protest activity, participating in drafting, drawing and monitoring of an international treaty, and urging

object institutionalized etc.. Yuan (2007) described the development of INGOs as a net, and the key feature is unbalance of distribution and influence between southern and northern countries.

There is an increasing awareness that project management skills play a crucial role in making a project successful in NGOs (Mukasa & Sarah, 2002). In NGOs' project management, reporting, monitoring and oversight of their works are required. Funders generally ask for reporting and assessment in which the information collected is not necessarily access to by the public. On the other hand, there are associations and watchdog organisations to research and publish the details of NGOs' performance in some certain geographic areas (Davies, 2001).

In China, NGOs are also known as corporations, civilian organisations, non-profit organisations, and tertiary departments. From 1990's, NGOs developed quickly in China. According to the statistic from the World Bank (2004), the total number of NGOs in China has reached 133,000 at the end of 2002; and the number of foundations has reached to 1268. Additionally, there are a great number of grassroots organisations and community organisations working actively at the grassroots level. With a focus on the remote areas and the disadvantaged social groups, NGOs in China established and developed programmes on environmental protection, hygiene, education, scientific research, culture, poverty alleviation, legal aid, and social welfare (World Bank, 2004).

### **2.3.2.2 NGO Programme Evaluation**

The World Bank Working Group, an international stakeholder, described the evaluation of NGOs' project performance as:

The goals of evaluation are to learn from experience, to provide an objective basis for assessing the results of the organisation's work, and to provide accountability in the achievement of its objectives. It also

improves organisational work by identifying and disseminating the lessons learned from experience and by framing recommendations drawn from evaluation findings. (Howard, 2004, p.2)

The assumption explained the whole evaluation process and described the term “programme evaluation” in NGOs comprehensively.

In line with the dramatic growth in the number of the NGOs, a concern to identify the achievements and performance of them has grown (Davies, 2001). He (2001) also pointed out that the literature on the evaluation of NGOs’ activities is growing. A growing number of researchers focus on the experimentation with specific evaluation methods, such as participatory approaches, for assessing project activities and their impacts (Goyder et al., 1997; Guijt, 1998). Compared with the method literature, a number of NGOs have developed their own guidelines of the programme evaluation (Goslin & Edwards, 1995; Platt, 1996; Broughton & Hampshire, 1997; Barton, 1997; Rubin, 1998; Roche, 1999), based on a wider perspective of across sectors and areas. At the same time, Fowler (1997) gave specific attention to building of organisation’s evaluation ability and performance assessing. Having been differed from the more prescriptive and normative approaches of the method literature, the studies of NGOs’ programme evaluation are more critical and analytic (Davies, 2001). The aware of the need for the programme evaluation in NGOs has increased a lot from 1980s when there was outright hostility (Howes, 1992).

On the other hand, in contrast to this operational literature, NGOs’ related to independent literature which focuses on operation of the programme evaluation activities is few (Carlsson, et al., 1994). Hence, this research was designed to contribute to this field. Literature of public critical views on the judgment of NGOs’ performance is increasing (de Waal, 1998; Maren, 1998; Bond, 2000; Shawcross, 2000). Another category of the NGOs’ performance literature is from the internal perspective. In another word, the insiders from the NGOs produced such biographical literature which focuses on the programme monitoring and the evaluation practice

(Morris, 1991).

The study, *Searching for Impact and Methods: NGO Evaluation Synthesis Study* (Riddell et al., 1997), looked at sixty reports of total 240 projects which were implemented in twenty-six developing countries. It summarized that in the heels of data and interviews carried out in all the different case study countries, it lacked reliable evidence on the impact of the NGO projects and programmes, despite of growing interest in the evaluation. In the conclusion of the study, they suggested that:

...repeated and consistent conclusion drawn across countries and in relation to all clusters of studies is that the data are exceptionally poor. There is a paucity of data and information from which to draw firm conclusions about the impact of projects, about efficiency and effectiveness, about sustainability, the gender and environmental impact of projects and their contribution to strengthening democratic forces, institutions and organisations and building civil society. There is even less firm data with which to assess the impact of NGO development interventions beyond discrete projects, not least those involved in building and strengthening institutional capacity, a form of development intervention whose incidence and popularity have grown rapidly in the last five years. (Riddell, et al., 1997, p. 99)

Oakley (1999) reached a similar conclusion in a study of forty-five Danish NGOs' projects conducted in four countries. The conclusion raised the doubt about the NGOs' evaluation and information which they collected for the improvement. In another word, whether they know what they are doing.

Davies (2001) proposed different factors that lead to the lack of programme evaluation knowledge of NGOs. They comprise with ambitious expectations; complexity caused by scale; diversity of activities; vague objective; tools being used; absence of baseline information; and adequate monitoring systems. In both the studies of Fowler (1997) and Riddell et al. (1997), the NGOs used performance criteria to measure the projects. However, most of them are quite ambitious for what will be achieved. As Riddell et al. (1997) noted that: "...the conclusion is usually cautious and

tentative... as set of anticipating exceedingly high expectations of what can be said about development impact” (p. 66).

Large scales of NGOs lead to hierarchical structures, which result in various objectives and evaluation strategies (Davies, 2001). Large international NGOs may have a large group of corporation partners (including implementing partners and stakeholders). In this case, the NGO organisation has objectives and evaluation strategies at each level; while their partners will in turn have their own ones. Fowler (1997) suggests that for large international NGOs, the only manageable way is that various objectives are clearly nested. In another word, the local objectives are detailed version of the macro-level ones, and then as judging the smallest units of a project, it can be applied as a raw material for judging the larger units that they belong to. However, it is complicated to do so.

The NGOs, especially large ones, tend to be generalists. Thus diverse activities are conducted across a number of sectors (Oakley, 1999). It makes more difficult to compare and aggregate the information of the programme performance. Davies (2001) noted that some NGOs proposed the approach of initiating more thematic studies that focus on one type of activity across a number of countries. While some others developed assessment methodologies tailored to specific types of interventions. Both approaches echoed to the problem through specialisation. At the same time, few organisations used the way of reducing the scale of the activities to maintain a more holistic focus. Davies (2001) summarized that country-based studies showed more potential to establish public participation and accountability.

In the NGOs, there are some widely recognised vague objectives which are difficult to identify their realisation, such as empowerment, organisational strengthening and development of the society. The value of what has been achieved is usually based on the local context and the history (Davies, 2001). However, it seems common in NGOs. Because as Dart (1999) notes, many important development are not measurable.

Fowler (1997) in his study pointed out that one problem is the limitation of the instruments which the NGOs used to evaluate the programme. Most of the NGOs use the Logical Framework as a planning and monitoring tool, but there have been a lot of arguments on it (Wallace, et al., 1997). Davies (1997) argues that the Logical Framework is useful in encouraging the identification of the indicators at the planning stage, but less so as in the project evaluation; because the Logical Framework generally focuses on the identification of the planning indicators instead of the evaluation. Besides the Logical Framework, some NGOs have been actively searching for appropriate approaches and tools for the programme evaluation. Most of the NGOs paid more attention to the methods that encourages participation (Guijt, 1998). However, aggregation of the tools, large scale of the collected information, and diverse country context make the problem more complicated.

A common complaint of absence of the baseline information can be found in universal NGOs and donor meta-evaluations / synthesis studies (Mansfield, 1996; Riddell et al., 1997; Oakley et al., 1998; Evison, 1999). It was mainly caused by less attention paid on the baseline information collection at the beginning stage. And few NGOs proposed the reason that the baseline information has been lost or forgotten during the long project period, or the evaluation teams can not access to it (Goyder et al., 1997). Although the monitoring systems have been commonly established by the NGOs, a lot of writers (such as Fowler, 1997; Riddell et al., 1997; Roche, 1999) discovered the problems of expenditure, activities, outputs, and little great impacts caused by the monitoring (Devies, 2001). Devies (2001) noted that the most important reason for the problems might be the organisational structures and relationship. The problems include:

Activities are measured against activity plans, expenditure against budget. These are immediate tasks where delays are visible and have consequences for those responsible. Staff have to cope with the short term before they can worry about the long term. On the other hand

there are external demands for information about performance, arising primarily from donors and governments. Financial reporting is required most often, and then implementation relative to plans, then much less frequently, achievement in terms of changes in people's lives (purpose and goal level type statements). Not being dependent on their clients for their financial survival, NGO's incentives to attend to clients' judgements about effects and impact are dependent on organisational culture and values. (Devies, 2001, p. 4)

## **2.4 Summary and Rationale for Study**

This chapter reviewed the literatures of the evaluation in education and the programme evaluation in Non-Government Organisations. The literature about the evaluation in education presented the definition, the purposes, the characteristics, the models, and the framework. And the differences between the evaluation and the measurement, the research and the learner appraisal were compared. In this research, the object is the evaluation of a programme. Thus, the evaluation literatures provided the reasons and the ways of conducting the evaluation in contexts. Furthermore, it confirmed the significance of the evaluation of programme. It was the core reason to conduct this research. The purpose of the evaluation, as Phillips (1997) asserted, is to provide information for decision making. And Kaufman et al. (2006) proposed that the purpose is to compare results with intentions. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) (1996) added the purpose of the evaluation is to analyse the process of the implementation and the impact or changes; and then identify problems and important lessons for improving future projects. The significance of the evaluation is the basis for this study and the research questions.

The focus of this research study is on an educational programme conducted by a non-government organisation in China. It was encouraged by the dramatic development of the NGOs and the growing literatures on the evaluation of NGOs' activities (Davies, 2001). The researcher's personal interests, knowledge and working experience in a NGO also contribute to the design of this research project. The foci of this study are the evaluation performance of an educational programme in China. The following chapter details the methodology that the researcher selected to discover the intention and action of the project evaluation as well as addressing the research questions.

# Chapter Three

## Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed related theories and literature. In this chapter, it will present the theoretical consideration of the research methodology, research design, methods used for data collection, sampling and respondents, data analysis, validity and triangulation of the research and ethical considerations. Moreover, based on the researcher's personal research experience, limitations will be illustrated at the end of this chapter.

### 3.2 Research Methodology

Definition of the term “methodology” is as “the approaches to, kinds and paradigms of research”; while methods describe procedures and techniques applied to gather data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 47). For the educational programme supported by an international non-government organisation (INGO) and carried out in China, the methodology used to investigate evaluation performance of the programme is required to be consistent with the context. In order to accomplish the research objectives, the researcher applied qualitative descriptive research methodology to describe characteristics of the situation.

The descriptive research, as Churchill (1999) mentioned, is used to describe the characteristics of certain groups as well as to estimate the proportion of people in a specified population who behaves in a certain way. Descriptive research should define questions, people surveyed, and the method of analysis prior to beginning data

collection. The data collected are often quantitative, and statistical techniques are usually used to summarize the information. At the same time, from the explanation of Wikipedia (2008), it describes data and characteristics about the population or the phenomenon being studied. In a descriptive research, the questions of who, what, where, when and how are answered. However, the definition from Picciano (2004) is more comprehensive. He defined the descriptive research as involving describing and interpreting events, conditions, or situations of the present. It can be taken in many forms. The ethnographic and historical researches are frequently considered as variations of the descriptive research. Generally, findings and conclusions of a descriptive research can be only applied to the sample or the population studied.

Descriptive research can be implemented by either qualitative or quantitative ways for describing or interpreting a current event, condition, or situation (Picciano, 2004). In a descriptive research, the data collecting methods can be involved in surveys, questionnaires, or test results. For the data which can be analysed by statistical techniques, it would be considered as quantitative descriptive research (Picciano, 2004). Picciano noted that sometimes, the qualitative and quantitative methods can be combined or mixed in a study.

Picciano (2004) summarised the basic characteristics of the descriptive research as (1) it provides a descriptive analysis of the issue studied. Readers will be in charge of making inferences. (2) Various types of the data such as qualitative, quantitative or mixed can be provided. (3) It is commonly to use wide research questions. The sources of data are involving persons, documents and records. And the tools of data collection should be structured interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and standardized tests.

Currently in the educational research, the descriptive research is popular for its flexibility and the fact that it can deal with various topics. An additional reason is that the data can be collected from a wide variety of sources (Picciano, 2004). In this research, the data collection methods were descriptive questionnaire survey, interview

and documentary review. Burns (1997) noted that in the educational research, the most commonly used descriptive method is survey. The aim of the descriptive survey is to estimate the nature of existing conditions as precisely as possible. On the other hand, Prior (2003) mentioned that under the study of the written documents, it is useful to help forming a visible phenomena. Moreover, Cohen et al. (2007) also summarized that the documentary review can show how situation has evolved over times.

To sum up, the objective of this research is to investigate the evaluation performance of an educational programme. Based on this objective, the researcher has implemented qualitative methodology, because this methodology can estimate the nature of existing conditions as precisely as possible and help forming a visible phenomena. The research design will be introduced as follows.

### **3.3 Research Design**

This research study is descriptive research which allows the researcher to investigate the evaluation issues in an educational programme, and provides an appropriate context in relation to the research questions. An international non-government organisation supplies a suitable context for the research.

Before the research, the researcher has accumulated some knowledge about project monitoring and educational programme review through two-year work on the educational programme of Income Generation/Vocational Education (IG/VE) component of Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project (YMBEP) of Save the Children United Kingdom (UK) China Programme. This working experience raised some questions about existing project evaluation performance. Moreover, the researcher had used the related literature to critique the issues of the research topic.

All of these factors assisted forming the opinions and the research design. The researcher proposed the scope of this research as: (1) examining current project evaluation practice/process/strategy; (2) investigating and examining the views from Save the Children staff; and the project participants in relation to the evaluation process; feedback resulting from the evaluation practice; and any subsequent changes to the programme delivery; (3) reviewing proposals and contracts (related documents) to find out the requirements of the programme evaluation from the stakeholders; (4) identifying and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the current programme evaluation strategies based on the requirements from the programme documents.

To fulfil the proposed research scopes, three data collection methods design (documentary review, interviews and questionnaires) had been implemented in this research. In this way, it will triangulate the data and enhance the validity of the research (Burns, 2000). To collect viewpoints in words and categories of Save the Children staff and the project participants about the naturalistic settings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) , the researcher implemented interviews and questionnaires; while the documentary review was used to search out existing recorded evaluation issues and the programme evaluation principles, such as the requirements from the programme stakeholders, organisation internal evaluation system and other related project evaluation tools to be responsive to local context and stakeholders' needs (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The research design, instruments of data collection, information sheets and consent forms applied in the study were approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC). Before collecting data, formal consent was gained from all participants for the interviews, questionnaires and Save the Children organisation. There were no children involved in this research.

### **3.4 Methods Used in Research**

The writer employed three data collection methods in this research. They are

documentary analysis, interview and questionnaire.

### **3.4.1 Documentary Analysis**

A broad range of the IG/VE project evaluation documents had been reviewed and analysed by the researcher. Wellington (2000) viewed the document collection and analysis as researching for the secondary sources, which can provide important historical information on any educational area. It is an excellent source of additional data. It can show how situations have evolved over time (Cohen et al., 2007). From the Instructional Assessment Resources (IAR) (The University of Texas, 2007), the documentary analysis is a systematic examination. For a programme, the documents may include mission statements, training materials, policy and procedure manuals or client instructions in order to identify program needs and challenges or to describe the program. A critical examination is the central focus of the analysis. The document analysis is appropriate to gain an insight of the program activity or service. Moreover, the documentary analysis can be used to examine trends, patterns, and consistency; provide basic information for an interview, survey or observation; evaluate aspects of a program.

The IAR (The University of Texas, 2007) noted that as analysing the documents, the analyst just spent time on selecting and analysing the documents, in which process the clients and program operators were not involved. It is helpful to analyse the documents with related experience or training in content analysis. A low time commitment is required to analyse documents of a program according to the number of documents to be examined. Generally, five steps are involved in a planning of a documentary analysis. They are (1) describe the context; (2) identify stakeholder's needs and develop central questions; (3) determine the purpose; (4) determine how to use the results; (5) develop criteria.

In this research, the document analysis revealed the requirements of the programme

evaluation both from external stakeholders and internal organisational principles. In this research, the researcher have collected and analysed two groups of documents which were pre-existing. They include intention documents (the programme evaluation requirements from the stakeholders and Save the Children organisation) and action documents (external and internal monitoring and review reports and records of programme evaluation activities). In conjunction with the interviews and questionnaires, the documents of action group provided an excellent source of additional data and established an excellent means of data triangulation (Wellington, 2000) because the documentary information of the group provided written evidence of occurring evaluation activities. These comprised formal reports and records in archives. In the interviews and questionnaires, the researcher collected data about these same things from the programme management persons. It was oral and personal. In this way, a data triangulation of existing programme evaluation work occurred.

### **3.4.2 Interviews**

In the research, ten interviews in which eleven interviewees participated have been conducted to collect data (nine interviewees were interviewed solely; and the IG/VE project manager and assistant were interviewed as a group). Kvale (1996) remarked the interview as interchanging views among people on a certain topic. The core is the knowledge production created by human interaction. One of the purposes of interview, as explained by Cohen et al. (2007), is to gather data, such as in surveys situations. Hinds (2000) noted that when a research requires in-depth qualitative interpretive information, the interview is appropriate. In wide context, the purposes of interview are varied. Cohen et al. (2007) summarized the interview is:

- ◆ to evaluate or assess a person in some respect;
- ◆ to select or promote an employee;
- ◆ to effect therapeutic change, as in the psychiatric interview;
- ◆ to test or develop hypotheses
- ◆ to gather data, as in surveys or experimental situations;

- ◆ to sample respondents' opinions, as in doorstep interviews.  
(Cohen et al., 2007, p. 351)

In the field of the research, the interview, as a research method, may aim at gathering data which is the information “inside a person’s head” (Tuchman, 1972); testing hypotheses or to suggest new ones; identifying variables and relationships; being used in conjunction with other methods in the research (Cohen et al., 2007).

The purpose of an interview decides the type used in a study. It is the issue described as “fitness for purpose” (Cohen et al., 2007). Generally speaking, if the researcher wishes to gather information for comparing, the interview must be standardized and quantitative. On the other hand, if the one wishes to get unique, personalized data, the qualitative, open-ended, unstructured interviews should be used. Patton (1980) outlined four types of the interview as: informal conversational interviews; interview guide approaches; standardized open-ended interviews; and closed quantitative interviews. Kvale (1996) pointed out that the main difference of the interviews was the degree of structure which reflected the purpose of the interview. Based on this statement, Cohen et al. (2007) outlined four main types of the interview as: the structured interview, the unstructured interview, the non-directive interview and the focused interview. In this study, the purpose was to investigate the evaluation performance of the programme. Hence, structured interviews were applied using a designed interview schedule.

In this research, the aim of the interviews was to collect viewpoints from Save the Children staff and prefecture and county level site office managers about the existing project evaluation performance. The interview participants received information sheets and consent forms before the interviews. After formal consent was obtained, the researcher conducted interviews. Limited by resource and time, and because of the significant role which the IG/VE project officer played in the whole project, the interview with the project officer was tape-recorded. In addition, some of the

interviews were conducted in Chinese, because some of the interviewees can speak English. After the interviews, the researcher translated the raw data into English as coding with the assistant of the translation checker of this research.

During the interview, the researcher introduced the topic and the purpose of this research at the beginning, and then raised warm-up questions about participants' basic information. Based on the interview schedule (see Appendix I), four domains questions were hired. They were (1) understanding of the attitudes towards project evaluation; (2) the IG/VE project evaluation practices; (3) influence of the project evaluation; (4) problems and suggestions.

### **3.4.3 Questionnaires**

In this research, to collect existing project evaluation performance information from the low ranking management persons, fourteen participants who are responsible for the individual projects participated in the questionnaire survey. Cohen et al. (2007) described the questionnaire as “a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher” (p. 317). The questionnaires are often comparatively straightforward to code and analyse (Wilson & McLean, 1994). From Wikipedia (2008), the questionnaire is a research method with a target researching group. It consists of a series of designed questions to collect information about attitude, feeling, response and acknowledgement of knowledge from respondents. Barrett (2000) defined the questionnaire as “printed list of questions used to find out what people think or feel about an issue, product or service.” (p. 5). The questionnaires can be conducted away from the researcher in the form of a self-administered, group-administered or postal questionnaire. Oppenheim (1992) argues that a structured interview with a series of standardised questions in the form of face-to-face or by telephone can be also viewed as a questionnaire. He further points out that the function of the questionnaire is measurement. The purposes of the study decide the issues measured in the questionnaire.

The principles of designing a questionnaire are well documented (e.g. Converse & Presser, 1986; Oppenheim, 1992). Varied requirement of the data leads to different application of the questions types in a questionnaire. Closed (or fixed-response) questions which ask respondents to mark the most appropriate answer from a number of alternative responses to a question can be used to collect quantitative data (Oppenheim, 1992; Jordan, 1998). On the other hand, qualitative data can be collected by open (or free-response) questions which require respondents to answer in their own words (Oppenheim, 1992; Jordan, 1998). Converse and Presser (1986) criticise that the closed questions intend to force participants to choose the answer from the provided ones rather than answering in their own words. However, they further note that a well designed response category can make it more accurate to investigate differences among the respondents. Schuman and Presser (1996) emphasise that the questionnaire design should begin with open questions, especially in pilot or pre-test works. Because the results of such open questions can be used to develop appropriate response categories for the closed questions. In this way, the advantages of both open and closed questions can be combined (Converse & Presser, 1986).

The questionnaire employed in this research applied open-ended, closed, scale items and multiple choice questions at the same time (see Appendix II). The closed items allowed the participants to choose from two or more fixed alternatives (Burns, 1997). The dichotomous items which refer to providing two alternatives only (Burns, 1997) were used in three questions. They were easier to code and analyse than narrative data (Bailey, 1994). The open-ended items which supply a reference or structure to collect word-based data (Cohen, et al., 2007) were used for four questions to collect their background information and problems and suggestions. It was suitable to apply such questions to collect such information, as there were so many possible responses (Cohen, et al., 2007). In the questionnaire, three questions were developed by scale items, which can reflect degrees or extents of the data (Burns, 1997). To explore the project evaluation practice, four multiple choice questions were employed in the

questionnaire. They allowed the researcher to collect likely range of information to give statements (Cohen, et al., 2007) of the existing project evaluation practice.

In this research, the researcher applied postal questionnaire approach. The postal questionnaires are a cheap and effective method for collecting information from a great number of people who scatter widely. Furthermore, the absence of the researcher can provide a free environment for the participants to make their answers (Oppenheim, 1992; Jordan, 1998). However, Barrett (2000) argued that the weaknesses of the postal questionnaires were also caused by the fact that the researcher did not present while the respondents make their answers. Jordan (1998) explained that if the respondents of a postal questionnaire have anything that they feel unclear, it is no chance for them to be explained by the researcher. Hence, Barrett (2000) suggested that careful design of the questions is important in a postal questionnaire. Additionally, Oppenheim (1992) noted that while the respondents make their answers, they may miss several of whole sections of the questions; answer in wrong order or incompletely; or ask somebody to complete the questionnaire.

In this research, the participants received information sheets, consent forms by mail before the survey. After formal consent was obtained from all of them, the researcher posted the questionnaires to them. Then the participants completed the questionnaires, and posted back to the researcher. All questionnaires were designed and completed in Chinese. Whilst analysing, the researcher translated the collected data into English with the assistance of the translation checker of this research.

### **3.5 Sampling and Respondents**

Cohen, et al. (2007) described sampling as defining the population on which the research will focus. Furthermore, they summarised four key factors that should be

taken into consideration in sampling. They are “the sample size, representativeness and parameters of the sample, access to the sample, and the sampling strategy to be used” (p. 100).

For the interviews in this research, the sampling was decided following the longitudinal project management ranks. A total of eleven invitations of the interview were emailed to the target participants. They were the persons involved in the management of the IG/VE project. Having obtained the organisational permission of implementation of this research, five Save the Children staff from the office of provincial level and six site office managers from the prefecture and the county level responded the invitations. One hundred percent of the total issued invitation was responded. Among the five Save the Children staff from the provincial office, there were manager of the provincial office, manager and deputy manager of the Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project (YMBEP), officer and assistant of the IG/VE project. The other six participants were the managers of the prefecture and the county site offices. Nine of the interviewees were interviewed solely. Just the IG/VE project manager and assistant from provincial office were interviewed as a group. All the interviews followed schedules designed by the researcher. Depending on different management levels from which they came, the questions in the schedules were slightly varied (see Appendix I). Thus, based on the different schedules, the analysis of the interview data was divided into two groups (group 1 and 2).

In order to triangulate the data of the project evaluation performance, the researcher conducted a postal questionnaire survey to collect data of project evaluation practice from the low ranking management persons. In deciding the sampling, with consideration of the representativeness and access, the researcher selected fourteen persons who were responsible for the individual IG/VE projects from total forty-eight. The selected participants of the questionnaire survey came from three prefectures where the IG/VE project is implemented. Seven represented projects were launched in the Phase One (project pilot phase) in the three experienced counties; and other seven

represented projects were launched recently after the Phase One in five new counties.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

The researcher used qualitative descriptive research methodology to define the existing IG/VE project evaluation. As to organising and presenting the data analysis, the way of organising was by instruments. The researcher presented the results of each instrument (Cohen, et al., 2007) (including documentary analysis, interview and questionnaire in this research). In this way, it was easier to reflect the research questions one by one.

#### **Documentary Analysis**

Documentary analysis plays an important role in an educational research study. The researcher conducted documentary analysis in this research to discover the requirements of the programme evaluation and collect data of existing written evaluation activities and reports. As the documents that would be reviewed and analysed have been chosen, the writer also settled two categories as intention and action which reflected mentioned purposes respectively. Then the analysis was based on the two categories, which involved content analysis method. In the educational research, content analysis was usually defined as the process of summarizing and reporting texts (Cohen et al., 2007) which include any written communicative materials (Krippendorp, 2004). The researcher applied the typological analysis in documentary analysis. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) described the typological analysis as a process of putting data into groups, subsets or categories according to some criterion. On the other hand, Miles and Huberman (1984) remarked it as secondary coding. In this way, descriptive codes are drawn out and put into subsets. In this research, firstly, collected documents were put into the two categories. And then,

the researcher sub-categorised the intention documents as external and internal on the basis of the source of the data.

The coding of intention documents described the IG/VE project evaluation principles which were generated from the stakeholders, Save the Children organisation and the IG/VE project provincial management office. The findings of the intention documents analysis provided the response to the research question about the requirements of the programme evaluation. On the other hand, the action documents analysis summarised and reported programme evaluation activities and reports. The key points, such as the time, purpose, context, and approaches, were generated when analysing the data in action documents; especially the researcher coded and summarized the limitations and the development of the activities. The descriptive data summarized from formal reports and records of activities for archives provided written evidence of occurring project evaluation activities, which established means of data triangulation of the research in conjunction with the interviews and the questionnaires.

## **Interviews**

Qualitative data of the interviews presented oral viewpoints from the project management staff. The data was derived from the transcripts and translation of the interviews. When analysing the interview data, the writer used content analysis method and coding. In educational research, Cohen et al. (2007) defined content analysis as the process of summarizing and reporting texts which including any written communicative materials (Krippendorp, 2004). The researcher chose to use this method because of the descriptive purpose of the study. As a result, four domains of the data were drawn for analysing. They included their attitude, practice, influence and problems. Under the four domains, the writer applied coding method to analyse data. Coding is the basic technique in the process of qualitative data analysis. According to Bryman (2004), coding is “a process of cutting up one’s transcripts into files of chunks of data, with each file representing a code” (p. 409). Bryman further

explained possible problems with the coding of the qualitative data analysis. One is possibility of losing the context; while another is possibility of leading to fragmentation of data and losing of narrative flow of what people say. Hence, the researcher paid attention to the context of the interviewees' working setting when coding the data. At different management positions, they provided information with various focuses. On the other hand, the interview of the IG/VE project officer was tape-recorded. In order to analyse the data to the extent as much as possible, the whole transcript was re-checked by listening to the tape, reading and organising to refine the main points. When presenting the findings, the writer looked back to check whether they presented the real meaning of the origins of people's words.

### **Questionnaires**

The data from the questionnaires in this research revealed the cognition of the project evaluation from the low ranking persons who are responsible for individual projects. A broad questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions was applied in this study. However, very few words based on responses were collected. When analysing the quantitative data, the researcher added up the responses to each question to present the tendency. The findings were also represented in four domains which were attitudes, practice, influence and problems. The information from the questionnaires provided another means of data triangulation in this research in conjunction with the interview and the documentary analysis.

### **3.7 Validity and Triangulation**

Merriam (1988) noted that "all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (p. 163). Cohen et al. (2007) also described the validity as the touchstone in all kinds of educational research. If a research study

is invalid, it is worthless. In this research, the validity is the principle of quality judgement. The validity in qualitative and quantitative researches may take many forms, such as the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the extent triangulation, the objectivity of the researcher, careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and statistical treatments (Cohen et al., 2007; Winter, 2000). “Validity should be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute state.” (Gronlund, 1981, p. 133) Merriam (1998) emphasised that internal validity and external validity should be always realized in mind by the researcher. According to Cohen et al. (2007), “the internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data.” (p. 135) In addition, Cohen and his colleagues emphasised the accuracy of phenomena description in a valid research. In this research, the internal validity deals with the question of whether the findings have captured what is really about the gap between the project evaluation intention and the action. In order to ensure the internal validity, the researcher used the strategy of data triangulation. Three data collection instruments had been applied to offer multiple sources of data.

The external validity is the degree to which the findings of one study can be generalized to other population, cases or situations (Cohen et al., 2007). In order to ensure the external validity in relation to this research, the researcher paid attention to the representativeness while sampling. The writer designed this research in the hope that the findings could help improving the educational project evaluation performance, and promoting the whole programme development. In addition, the experience and lessons from this research could be shared with other educational programmes in China, and provide literature records for the theory of NGOs’ educational programme evaluation. It is hopefully to establish the domain on which the research findings can be generalised.

Campbell and Fiske (1959) put forward that “triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research” (p. 131).

According to Cohen and his colleague (2007), triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods of data collection in the study of the same phenomenon. Compared with the single measurement applied research, the validity and reliability of the research can be ensured more by the triangulation approach (Denzin, 1997). In this research study, the researcher applied three research methods to collect the data: documentary analysis, interview and questionnaire. The documentary information which comprised formal reports and records for archives provided written evidence of occurring evaluation activities; while in the interviews and questionnaires, the researcher collected data about these same things from the people who are in charge of managing the projects. It was oral and personal. In this way, a triangulation of data of the existing programme evaluation performance occurred.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

A number of people who were related to the IG/VE project were involved in this research. They were teachers, community members, and project management staff. Most of them were management persons of the project, and used to work with the researcher. The ethical issues generally refer to the awareness of the influence on the participants caused by the subject matter and methods of research. (Cohen et al., 2007). In the practice of this research, Save the Children was an experienced and responsible international organisation; thus it had internal policies and measurements to protect children and participants of the projects. On the other hand, with two years working experience in the project and local cultural environment, the researcher knew most of the participants of this research. As a result, it may give rise to conflict of interest. In order to collect data, assurance was given to preserve the anonymity of respondents. In the process of data collecting, the researcher carefully managed and kept balance, and followed relevant ethical principles.

In the early stage of the research, the informed consent is vitally important. It means that the researcher is required to obtain the consent and co-operation of the participants, and the organisation permission as well (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The subjects have right to freedom and self-determination, thus the informed consent is protection and respect of such right. Diener and Crandall (1978) defined informed consent as the procedure that individuals make decisions on whether to take part in an investigation as being informed of issues that may make influences on their decisions. The definition summarized four significant features of the informed consent. They are competence, voluntarism, full information, and comprehension.

On the other hand, the first stage of the research involved in obtaining permission of conducting study in the target sites and projects (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). For Save the Children UK, it was helpful for the improvement of the programme evaluation and advocating their work. Their internal information policy prescribed that the project information can be used to advocate the project work, but forbid for any commercial use. First of all, the researcher has got oral permission from Save the Children China Programme Kunming office, and an informal e-mail from the manager of YMBEP. As arrived at Kunming, the writer got written permission from the organisation and signed the agreement of conducting the research before starting of the data collection.

From cultural and language perspectives, this research in China was different from the ones conducted in western countries. For example, Chinese people were more compliant and cooperative because of cultural norms of being helpful and agreeing. In this case, the researcher used a lot of follow-up questions to get their “true” ideas. For some community members and teachers from township level or countryside, it was a little difficult to understand this research comprehensively because of their cultural background and low education level. Thus the researcher paid more attention to explain the research to them. Before the interview, the writer talked with the Save the Children staff in person to clarify the purpose and explain the content of this research.

The information sheets were distributed and it stated clearly what they agreed to do, what it would be involved in and it may take about 30-45 minutes, the researcher intended to interview them no more than once, whether they would be on their own or with another interviewee(s), and whether it would be voice-recorded or not etc. And the consent forms stated that they would have opportunity to ask questions and have them answered before they gave consent. After signed consent forms has been received and ensured that they understood the research without any questions, the researcher started to negotiate proper time and place for the interviews. At the same time, the Save the Children site office staff from prefecture and county levels were called to clearly explain the purpose the research. Then, the information sheets and content forms have been posted or faxed to them. The process was as same as with provincial office participants. After the interviews, the researcher has been sharing the progress and feedbacks with all participants as much as possible. Since the writer used to work or contact with most of the participants in the past, it was easier to get access to the real situation and collect useful data instead of false positive replies.

For the post questionnaire survey, after confirming the participants, the researcher got their oral responses for participation. In this case, the information sheets, consent forms and questionnaires were posted together to each of them. At the same time, the researcher got a chance to visit the three prefectures with the IG/VE project officer. The research and their rights in this study have been explained to most of the participants of the questionnaire survey face to face. After the travelling, as the researcher was back to Kunming, the signed consent forms and completed questionnaires were received. However, although some useful opinions were expressed during the conversation between the writer and the participants, it was inappropriate to use this information in this research, because they were not collected by permitted research instruments.

This research was conducted in Chinese, especially the data collection. Thus, there were some differences and difficulties caused by different assumptions about specific

words and culture background. During the transcription and the translation process, my supervisor and the translation checker of the research provided me helpful guidance and assistance.

### **3.9 Limitations**

Overall, the data collection in this research was successful. Having been supported by the organisation, the researcher received 100 percent reply for both the interviews and the questionnaires, and got access to many project evaluation reports and records. However, there were still some limitations which need to be improved and explored in future. For the documentary analysis, because of the problem of project information handing over, some information, such as former project evaluation data, has been lost. On the other hand, limited by time, the researcher could just select part of appropriate documents from a great number of them. During one of the interviews, a participant suggested that several questions in the interview schedule were over academic. In other word, the design of the interview questions needed to be more practical and careful. Even all the questionnaires were returned, almost all open-ended questions about the problem and suggestions were left blank. After analysis, the researcher thought that it might because the participants were not willing to spend too much time on writing in words, or to offend the high management levels. Hence, careful design of the questions and the whole research should receive more attentions in the future studies.

To sum up, this chapter discussed and presented the methodology and data collection methods that the researcher applied in this research. With the presentation of the research instruments, the researcher's personal research experience was combined with them. The ethical consideration and the timeline explained the research process in detail. The next chapter will present the findings of the research.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, research findings and analysis will be presented in three sections: findings of documents are presented followed by findings of interviews and findings of questionnaires. In the first section, findings of documents analysis will show the requirements from programme donors, stakeholders, and evaluation principles of Save the Children United Kingdom (UK). At the same time, documents of programme evaluation reports will reveal the current evaluation models and methods. In the second section, based on the interview questions, the information which came from the management level was analysed to show current Income Generation/Vocational Education (IG/VE) programme evaluation. In the third section, the data from the questionnaires will show the views from supervisors of individual projects about the programme evaluation. At the end of this chapter, a summary of consolidated findings will be presented.

### **4.2 Findings of Documentary Analysis**

Document collection and analysis is viewed as the researching of secondary sources (Wellington, 2000). In this research, I have collected and analysed two groups of documents which were pre-existing. They included intention documents (programme

evaluation requirements from the stakeholders and Save the Children organisation) and action documents (external and internal monitoring and review reports and records of activities). The analysis of documents was applied in conjunction with interviews and questionnaires.

The documents collected and analysed in this research included (1) proposals which were agreed by both Save the Children and the stakeholders, (2) Save the Children internal programme evaluation rules, (3) Income Generation/Vocational Education project evaluation system, (4) proposals from local schools and communities, and (5) evaluation reports and recorded activities. These documents have been categorized to analyse intent (documents types 1-4) and action (document type 5).

#### **4.2.1 Context, Authorship and Intended Audiences of Research Documents**

As listed above, the first type of analysed documents in this research were proposals agreed by Save the Children and the stakeholders. The proposal *Grant Contract- External Aid: Annex I- Description of the Action* was written in 2005 by Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project (YMBEP). The purpose of the proposal was to apply sponsoring grants from the European Community. It presented situation, working methods, budget of the Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project to its intended audience, the European Community. This proposal document described comprehensive directions for the Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project to follow, especially for the Income Generation/Vocational Education project component.

For Save the Children United Kingdom (UK) internal evaluation rules, the main document was Global Impact Monitoring (GIM) file. The document *Guideline for Global Impact Assessment* was developed by Save the Children organization in 2002. It provided directions of an organizational programme impact assessing framework to Save the Children UK offices internationally. Additionally, in this research, a report of Save the Children Global Impact Monitoring activity which was written in 2003 was

reviewed and analysed. The assessing activity recorded in the report was based on the guideline document of Global Impact Monitoring, and provided a sample for Save the Children UK programmes all over the world. In 2006, a training workshop handout about Global Impact Monitoring proposed the purpose and the working methods to Save the Children staff.

The Income Generation/Vocational Education project management manual was newly composed and edited by the Income Generation/Vocational Education project officer and the assistant in 2008. This manual was based on the comprehensive requirements from the proposals agreed by Save the Children UK and the European Community, while also absorbing Save the Children organization evaluation rules. Based on the former Income Generation project working manual, this new one developed and described a management system in detail for the whole Income Generation/Vocational Education project and for the individual projects as well. It provided tools and models for project proposal, monitoring and report. The intended audiences of the manual were management staff of the Income Generation/Vocational Education project from different management levels of the project (such as provincial, prefecture, and county levels).

A proposal composed by a teacher who was responsible for an individual project in a local school was analysed in this research. It was written in 2007 and based on the provided proposal format. Its intended audience was the Income Generation/Vocational Education project offices staff from each level. The proposal was randomly sampled by the researcher to show realistic use of the tool and to prove a sample of practice.

The report *YMBEP-Replication Phase Interim Narrative Report* was analysed in the research. It was written in 2007 by Save the Children UK Kunming office. The report was submitted to the European Community for the project interim progress and activities narrative. It presented the project evaluation and related meetings. An

external evaluation was described in it as well.

This external evaluation was recorded in the report *Review of the Income Generation Component of the Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project*. It was implemented and written by Klein, Lundblad & Monteleone (2006) from Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) Ulysses Programme in 2006. The report explained the reason of carrying out the evaluation, which implied the intended audience was Save the Children Kunming office manager and Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project management levels. It provided detailed information of the Income Generation/Vocational Education project, uncovered its weaknesses and made suggestions for improvement.

Another external evaluation was organised by Du in 2008. She wrote a report about this evaluation. The intended audiences of this report were the European Community, Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project and Income Generation/Vocational Education project. Similar to the report from Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) Ulysses Programme, it was a mid-term review of the project work. It was the latest project evaluation report.

Then an annual report of a County level site office was randomly sampled and analysed to present current evaluation methods. It was written in 2007 by the project assistant from Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project Eryuan County site office. The intended audience was the Income Generation/Vocational Education project officer in Kunming office.

Additionally, I collected and analysed two feedback files which were used to solve problems discovered in a project evaluation visit. The two feedback files were composed by the Income Generation/Vocational Education project assistant from Kunming office. They had been sent to the individual projects. They provided evidence of the project feedback work in the existing evaluation system.

#### **4.2.2 Intention Documents of the IG/VE project**

The group intention documents provided an “important historical perspective” (Wellington, 2000) on requirements of programme evaluation both from the outside stakeholders and the internal evaluation system. Gosling and Edwards (2007) noted that it is necessary to make several guidelines to show the extent of achieving specific objectives and the validity of the programme. In another word, these guidelines are programme evaluation principles. Hence, in this research, to investigate the Income Generation/Vocational Education programme evaluation, I have analysed the following documentary sources of evidence:

- (1) requirements in the proposals which were agreed by both Save the Children and the stakeholders;
- (2) save the Children UK global evaluation documents;
- (3) the IG/VE project evaluation principles and recorded evaluation methods;
- (4) proposals from schools and communities.

(1) The proposal which was agreed and signed by Save the Children and the European Commission described general programme evaluation procedures. These procedures included internal and external requirements. The procedures were applied to YMBEP and the IG/VE project as well. The proposal (2005) explained that, “all monitoring and evaluation will be in line with Save the Children UK’s Global Impact Monitoring Framework which takes into account five dimensions of change, based on the child rights principles of equity, participation and accountability” (p.17). Additionally, the proposal presented an evaluation plan for the YMBEP work on the following:

- ◆ baseline data collection;
- ◆ data collection by County Education Bureau and YMBEP site office (content: workshop attendance, school enrolment, attendance, gender, drop out);
- ◆ regular reporting system;

- ◆ performance appraisal system of employee management;
- ◆ mid-term external review conducted by five external, local, high profile education and finance specialists;
- ◆ Global Impact Monitoring Report led by Save the Children global education adviser and involved in an assessment team which formed by twenty-one members from Save the Children UK's Tibet, An Hui and Yunnan teams, focusing on the stakeholders' responses around principles of equity, accountability and participation; and
- ◆ A final evaluation that will be implemented involved in internal and external reviewers.

The proposal illuminated that the evaluation procedures were a working model established by Save the Children and local cooperation partners. They were proven to be effective in the Phase One of YMBEP (project pilot stage), and would be implemented in replication phases. At all the stages of planning and applying project evaluation, partners and beneficiaries would be involved in. The evaluation results would be reflected in future priorities and approaches for improvement (YMBEP, 2005).

However, I found some further requirements reported in the *YMBEP-Replication Phase Interim Narrative Report (2007)*. This report was submitted by the YMBEP to the European Community as a half-year report. The general report format was provided by the European Community. The format required “an updated action plan” comprising elements of activities, time and participators over a period of two years. For the Year 1, it required a report of the project progress; while for the Year 2, a plan was demanded (Save the Children UK, 2007). And it also asked questions about the partners and the project co-operation:

3.1 How do you assess the relationship between the formal partners of this Action (i.e. those partners which have signed a partnership statement)? Please specify for each partner organization

3.2 How would you assess the relationship between your organization and State authorities in the Action countries? How has this relationship affected the Action?

3.3 Where applicable, describe your relationship with any other organizations involved in implementing the Action.

3.4 Where applicable, outline any links you have developed with other actions

3.5 If your organization has received the previous European Community grants in view of strengthening the same target group, in how far has this Action been able to build upon/complement the previous one(s)?(List all previous relevant the European Community grants).

(Save the Children UK, 2007, p. 26-29)

(2) Save the Children organisational evaluation files mainly refer to the Global Impact Monitoring (GIM) which was applied based on the document *Guideline for Global Impact Assessment* (Save the Children UK, 2002). This programme evaluation system, as Save the Children UK's internal management method, has been widely applied in Save the Children UK's projects all over the world. Generally, the purpose of the term was to better understand the implications of organisational work; be able to share this understanding with others; become more accountable to all relevant stakeholders; improve work in the future; and support decision making at all levels (Save the Children UK, 2003). Overall, the purpose of carrying out a GIM was to gain insights into the main stakeholders' perceptions of the development and the influence of the projects.

Compared with the programme evaluation, the GIM mainly focused on the project influence (Save the Children UK, 2006). Save the Children's GIM files stated that it paid more attention to long term influence caused by what a project rather than specific output and expected result of a project. The GIM took consideration of the benefits for children and young people, especially the changes unexpected, negative

and not intended (Save the Children UK, 2006). The features of the GIM included: focusing on the project influence; focusing on the process that causes changes; focusing on the positive and negative changes; a flexible system, a comprehensive process, and a study process. Handouts (Save the Children UK, 2006) explained the significance of the GIM on the following:

- ◆ Through comparing projects performance in different counties, we can better understand what we have achieved and the shortages were.
- ◆ Through providing efficient evidence to support the project design, the policy making and advocacy, we can better improve our organisation and project work.
- ◆ We have a chance to examine our work from the view of child's right.
- ◆ We can share our achievement and working methods with others/other organisation to improve their work.
- ◆ We can raise our credit in the beneficiaries, such as children, youths, partners, communities, councils, stakeholders and administrators from different levels.

The GIM method proposed five dimensions of changes which were the core of Save the Children organisational programme evaluation. They were (Save the Children UK, 2006):

Dimension One: changes of children and youths' lives (life);

Dimension Two: changes of policies and practices which may influence the rights of children and youths (policy);

Dimension Three: changes of participation and actively exerting citizens' rights of children and youths (participation);

Dimension Four: changes of children and youths equity (equity);

Dimension Five: changes of supporting for children's right by society and community (society).

According to the five dimensions, Save the Children designed questionnaires for both students and teachers. The questions in the *GIM Questionnaires* (Save the Children UK, 2006) covered different aspects for the project beneficiaries, such as schooling,

equity issues, classroom issues, relationship issues, graduation and hygiene changes etc... For example, “Do you like school better than before now? Why?” and “What changes happened on the relations between teachers and students, and students and students?” (Save the Children UK, 2006, p. 13) These two questions were used to collect information for the dimension one.

The question “How do you convey your opinions and ideas to the teachers? How did the teachers respond to you before? And how do they respond now?”(Save the Children UK, 2006, p.14) was used to explore the changes of children’s rights as belonging to the dimension two. “Do you have the chance to participate in the decision- making of the classroom teaching and the school management? What is the situation before? If not, how do you think about it?” (Save the Children UK, 2006, p.14) This question was used to find out the change of participation for the dimension three. In the dimension four, the change of equity, the questions, such as “How have the teachers treated you when you have made some mistakes?” (Save the Children UK, 2006, p.15) were used. There were no related questions for the dimension five in the questionnaire.

The questions in the questionnaires which were developed based on the five dimensions as mentioned mainly focused on exploring viewpoints from children and teachers about the project changes and influences. There were five groups of questions according to the five dimensions in both teacher and children focused questionnaires. At the same time, the handout suggested several useful ways to collect information, such as painting, story telling, mapping, observing, record reviewing, and interviews.

Generally, the analysed documents showed that Save the Children UK organisation international evaluation method mainly referred to the GIM. The GIM paid a lot of attention to long term changes and influences of a group of projects.

(3) After analysing the *Income Generation Project Management Manual* (Su & Xi, 2008), specific project evaluation methods were abstracted. For the whole IG/VE project, the evaluation method was to compare the programme achievements of the year with the programme objectives; and collate the output of each individual project as well. After collecting and coordinating reports of each project, the project officer was in charge of editing the final annual report and submitted it to the project manager for checking (Su & Xi, 2008).

In the manual, a management framework for an individual project was described in detail. The specific procedures included 12 stages: (1) project introduction; (2) project proposal composing; (3) first project selecting; (4) baseline survey; (5) project confirm; (6) project proposal modification; (7) contract signed; (8) project management training; (9) project launch; (10) project implementation; (11) project monitoring; (12) project evaluation. Among these stages, the procedure (4) required forming a project baseline survey team in which involved personnel from the County, Prefecture and Kunming offices. The team went to the local potential schools and/or communities to carry out baseline data collection and evaluation of local requirements (Su & Xi, 2008). The stage (11) referred to a formative evaluation method. Su and Xi (2008) proposed that during the implementation of the project, according to the project proposal and contract, the project staff from the offices of each level and the beneficiaries were in charge of monitoring the project management, operation and financial statement to ensure project activities were according with the project objectives. The stage (12) project evaluation required the project offices or related external evaluators to evaluate the project regularly based on the requirements. Schools would develop project plans based on the results of the evaluation report.

The management framework suggested that in an individual IG/VE project, the proposal composed by schools or communities played a very important role in the whole project management cycle including evaluation. Hence, Su and Xi (2008) provided a proposal model in this manual. However, having analysed this proposal

model, I found very few evaluation plans or indicators in it. The model required project objectives and expected outputs, project background, management framework and responsibilities, timeline and developing plans, budget plans, resource plans, and risk foresight. The items in the proposal model mainly focused on the preparation of the project launching.

The time points of the project evaluation were required by the manual based on the project stages. They were evaluation of the project demand which referred to the baseline information collection, project mid-term evaluation and the final review.

For the project evaluation, Su and Xi (2008) summarised eight evaluation factors in the manual. They were:

- a. completion of the project plan;
- b. whether funds operation accord with the project plan and the budget;
- c. whether the activities accord with the project objectives; the validity of the project activities performance (input-output ratio);
- d. what economic profit gained?
- e. what social profit gained?
- f. capability of the working team;
- g. whether the working model can be replicated;
- h. sustainability of the project achievement.

The eight factors were closely linked with each other. Based on them and the old project evaluation tools, Su and Xi (2008) developed new tools for collecting evaluation information. For collecting baseline and project monitoring information, the manual provided *Baseline Survey and Evaluation Questionnaire and Interview Schedule* (Su & Xi, 2008). This tool was used to collect views about project performance from the beneficiaries at different project levels through questionnaires and focus groups to reflect project influence. And for the project report, a report model was provided to order collected evaluation data and information. The model

also ruled follow-up visiting reports and case studies which were usually composed by site office staff.

Su and Xi (2008) also provided a new *Score Card for IG/VE Project* based on the old one. The purpose of this score card was to supply a standard to evaluate feasibility of a new project; and to evaluate the achievement of a project in progress. There were twenty-one principles in the card. The highest score of an individual project could be 126. Generally, Su and Xi (2008) explained that the higher the score the more possibility to be successful for an individual project. Principles in the form generally could be summarised into five aspects, such as participation of the beneficiaries, vocational training, project management, project validity and children's benefit.

Furthermore, the manual (Su & Xi, 2008) provided other tools for project monitoring and review. The form *Project Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators* (Su & Xi, 2008) summarised evaluation indicators for individual projects in detail. For five types of the projects, seven types of indicators were provided in this form. Besides the featured indicators of different types of the projects, based on the project objectives, the project evaluation indicators also covered education, service, study supporting and participation as well. Generally, the indicators could show the extent of success of an IG/VE project. The education indicator could reflect the development of children's skill in the projects.

#### (4) project proposals from local schools and/or communities

In the project evaluation work, proposals composed by local schools or communities played a very important role. Based on this finding, I randomly sampled a proposal from a local school to analyse. The proposal (Tan, 2007) was about tea planting in Baqiao Primary school Gonglang Township Nanjian County Dali Prefecture. This project was funded by the European Community. The proposal was composed based on the model of project proposal mentioned above. Following the model, the proposal

described the project objectives, the expected output, the background and the local situation, the planned management framework and responsibilities, the timeline and developing plans, the budget plan, the resource plan, and the risk foresight. However, there were no project evaluation plans and methods incorporated. According to the programme evaluation method found in the manual above, that for the whole IG/VE project, the evaluation method was to compare the programme achievements of the year with the objectives; and collate the output of individual projects as well; the “objective” and the “expected output” were useful for the project evaluation. And in the proposal, the “timeline and developing plan” also proposed milestones which could be seen as important evaluation indicators in an individual project.

#### **4.2.3 Action Documents of the IG/VE project**

After the analysis of the intention documents, now I will present the findings of the analysis of the documentation of action which included the existing project evaluation activities of the IG/VE project. Items included external and internal review and monitoring reports and recorded activities. The documents in this group provided an “excellent source of additional data” and established an “excellent means of triangulation” (Wellington, 2000) in conjunction with the interviews and the questionnaires. This was because the documentary information in this group of documents provided written evidence of occurring activities. They comprised formal reports and records for archives. In the interviews and questionnaires, the researcher collected data about these same things from the management persons. It was oral and personal. In this way, a triangulation of data of the existing programme evaluation performance occurred.

In the report *YMBEP-Replication Phase Interim Narrative Report* (Save the Children UK, 2007), Save the Children reported that in May 2005, they submitted a final project report of the last phase to the UK Department for International Development (DFID). “DFID did not require us to conduct any evaluation of the project, but

approved the final report that was submitted to them” (Save the Children UK, 2007, p.3). This statement showed that some stakeholders do not require evaluation of the project. The report (Save the Children UK, 2007) then pointed out that in 2006, Save the Children developed an Education Management Information System (EMIS) to collect information and evaluate the projects. However, after discussion, the County Education Bureau felt such activity might generate information and data which could be seen as “sensitive”. Hence, YMBEP would look into other less sensitive ways of developing and applying the information system. From July to August 2006, an external evaluation was carried out for the IG/VE project. The evaluators were three consultants from Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) through their Ulysses Programme. The review and evaluation lasted for eight weeks. They looked at twelve existing IG/VE projects; found out weaknesses of the projects; and made recommendations for improvement. The reason and the final report will be presented later. In November 2006, an impact assessment workshop was organized in Beijing. The purpose of the workshop was to develop a monitoring framework for educational projects in China. Two YMBEP project officers attended the workshop and shared experience. The participators in this workshop agreed to develop a standardized monitoring and evaluation format to supplement regular ongoing monitoring procedures of information collecting by the end of April of 2007. However, as far as I know, such a format has not yet been finalised at the date of this research.

The report *Review of the Income Generation Component of the Yunnan Minority Basic Education Project* (Klein, Lundblad & Monteleone, 2006) stated that the purpose of carrying out this evaluation was to answer the two questions raised by Save the Children. One was, “Should Save the Children have an Income Generation programme?” and another was, “Should the IG/VE programme be school based or community based?” After discussion with the IG/VE staff, and visiting twelve existing project sites, Klein et al. summarised existing strengths and weaknesses of the IG/VE project, and made recommendations for improvement. Furthermore, they assisted the IG/VE staff to develop monitoring and review tools as well. They

identified the main weaknesses as lack of sufficient project and financial management skills at all levels, and lack of a framework which could be used to closely examine the viability of individual projects at designing stage. Based on these findings, the PWC Ulysses team helped the IG/VE team to develop a framework and monitoring tools for future project management. This framework has been applied to select and implement six new IG/VE projects after this review.

In March 2008, the IG/VE project implemented an external mid-term evaluation. Du (2008) used qualitative (interview) and quantitative (questionnaire) research methods to evaluate the project. Through comparing understanding, attitudes and judgments of the project by students and teachers from project schools and common schools, Du found out project advantages and weaknesses. The evaluation focused on the project management, implementation and influence and discovered several shortcomings of these aspects, and also summarised useful solutions.

Some data collected in this research suggested that the IG/VE project evaluation mainly relied on the method of reporting. Hence, I randomly sampled a project annual report (Save the Children UK, 2007) from Eryuan County site office. This report comprehensively introduced project situation, experience and lessons. The very meaningful section was “problems reflected in the implementation” (Save the Children UK, 2007, p. 2). It reflected that changing of employment, lack of time for managing the project and difference between plan and practice were the aspects that concern them most. The report was comprehensive and difficult to show specific project progress and improvement.

Among the project documents that I collected and analysed, there were two files that seemed to be useful information about feedback of project evaluation. They were follow-up visiting feedback and skill supporting feedback from the project staff. The *Students Activities Evaluation Form Tongguan Township Primary School Mojiang County* (Xi, 2008) is developed by the project assistant Mr. Xi after a project site

visiting of Tongyuan Townships primary school in Mojiang County Simao Prefecture. The form aimed to help solving evaluation problems raised by the local school, such as lacks tea planting skills. Furthermore, he also searched some professional skill materials for the teacher who was responsible for the project, such as information of fertilizer, composting skills and feedstuff directions.

#### **4.2.4 Key Findings of Document Analysis**

To sum up, the documentary analysis of this research study involved two groups of documents. They were intention documents and action documents. The analysed intention documents included the proposals agreed by Save the Children and the stakeholders, Save the Children UK organization international evaluation method (the GIM system), the Income Generation/Vocational Education project management manual, and the proposals from local schools and communities. The key findings of the document analysis in this research are:

Intention documents:

- a. the proposal submitted to the stakeholders suggested that the project evaluation should be in line with the GIM system; described an evaluation plan (including baseline survey, project monitoring, reporting system, performance appraisal system, mid-term reviews, the GIM report, and final evaluation); provided the report format and raised the questions about the project partners and the cooperation. However, a report showed that some stakeholders did not require evaluation of the IG/VE project.
- b. The GIM system aimed to explore the long term influences. In GIM activities, the questionnaires were applied to collect data about changes. There were no specific requirements of the GIM method and action.
- c. The IG/VE project management manual described evaluation method for the whole project and for the individual ones. The method was to compare the achievements with the objectives. The manual provided a detailed project proposal model and evaluation methods, time, principles and tools for the baseline data

collection, project monitoring and review.

- d. A randomly sampled project proposal provided no evaluation plan or methods. It described the proposed timeline and developing plan of the project which may be seen as the evaluation indicators for the individual project.

Action documents:

- a. In 2005, the YMBEP submitted a final report to the DFID. The document stated that DFID did not require Save the Children to conduct any evaluation of the project.
- b. In 2006, the PWC team conducted an external review of the IG/VE project to answer the questions raised by Save the Children.
- c. In 2006, an internal evaluation workshop was organised in Beijing by Save the Children. The workshop planned to provide a standardized evaluation format at the end of 2007. But it was not finalized yet.
- d. In 2008, a mid-term review of the IG/VE project was conducted by an external evaluator.
- e. A randomly sampled annual report composed by the County site office staff revealed the weakness of the main project evaluation method. The report was a comprehensive description.
- f. Feedback documents provided evidence of feedback existence in the project evaluation work in this research.

### **4.3 Findings of Interviews**

There were eleven IG/VE project management staff who participated in the research interviews. The term “participants” is used to refer to them in the analysis of the interviews. Based on the interview schedule, the researcher divided the participants into two groups. Group 1 is Save the Children UK Kunming office staff (provincial

level); and Group 2 is site office staff (prefecture and county level) who at the same time were in charge of local education department responsibility.

The interview schedule used for the two groups is appended (see Appendix I). The data collected in the interviews have been divided into four domains. They are (1) understanding of and attitudes towards project evaluation; (2) the IG/VE project evaluation practices; (3) project evaluation influence; (4) difficulties and suggestions. These domains emerged from coding and analysing the data thematically.

### **4.3.1 Understanding of and Attitudes towards Project Evaluation**

#### **Group 1**

In group one (provincial level project staff), there were four questions employed to discover participants' understanding of and attitudes towards project evaluation:

1. What do you think about programme evaluation?
2. Do you think it is important in programme management, implementing and replication? If yes, could you give an example?
3. What is the place of the evaluation take in programme management?
4. How much attention did you pay to it?

Save the Children provincial office staff expressed common opinions for the first question. They agreed that project evaluation is very vital for project development. For “*project practice and plan, it is necessary to carry out project evaluation*”, especially for “*making project replication plan*”. One participant from Save the Children Kunming office described project evaluation as:

*Monitoring refers to the formative examination of project progress. It ensures the project is progressing according to the project objectives. Evaluation usually happens in a certain time point as a summative method to review the project work.*

*It is a guarantee of project quality. Evaluation is a significant part of the project management circle.*

When answering the second question, all participants said “yes” to the question about whether project evaluation is important as they agreed in the first question. A participant said that “*in project management and implementation, evaluation can help discover problems, cumulative experience and get lessons, which will ensure successful project replication*”. They gave several examples to show the significance of the project evaluation. One of them is:

*In Phase one of the Income Generation project (2000-2005), scholarships were distributed to each project school. Under the circumstance of the project providing direct financial support to poor students, some poor families started to wait for money from the school instead of working hard to earn money. In the project review evaluation for DFID, project managers collected information about local education requirements. The finding of this evaluation suggested that poverty is just one of the causes of dropout. The opinion that studying is useless for employment was becoming more and more popular. As a result of this evaluation, from 2006, the Income Generation project adjusted its structure, and stopped scholarship distribution activities.*

For the third question, participants all used the term “*embody*” to describe the role of project evaluation. It means that the project evaluation should be run through out the project management cycle. One of them answered as “*it is hard to tell you “how much” of it. But I know it should happen at any time by anybody involved in the project, and so should its influence*”.

Responses from participants followed two themes when answering the fourth question. Two of them said: “*we pay a lot of attention on it, and almost participated in all of project evaluation activities*”. However, three of them expressed anxiety about project

baseline evaluation.

*In the old Income Generation project; because of lack of foresight, skill and personnel, half the projects did not establish baseline information records. At the same time, for a similar reason, early project evaluation did not attract much attention. As a result, the problems have not been discovered in time, which finally resulted in some failure of the old projects.*

To sum up, Save the Children provincial office project staff responded along similar lines in this domain. All participants agreed the significance of project evaluation, and took it as a “*necessary link*” in the project management cycle. Most of them described it as “*important way to discover problems and to ensure achievement of project objectives*”.

## **Group 2**

In this group, question 1 and 2 were applied to explore understanding and attitude towards project evaluation of prefecture and county site project office staff. Participants of this group at the same time take responsibility for local education bureaus. There were six site office staff who participated in this research interview. From the interview schedule, question 1 and 2 are as follows:

1. What do you think about programme evaluation?
2. Do you think it is important in programme management, implementing and replication? If yes, could you give some example?

Participants of this group expressed similar attitudes to project evaluation as the ones in the other group when answering these two questions. They confirmed the “*significance*” of project evaluation, and emphasized its important role in project work. One participant explained that

*local project practices and situation always keep changing. In this case, the project working plan and implementation directions should be adjusted at times. Project evaluation supplies gist to such adjustment, otherwise, the project work must go into a dead end.*

### **4.3.2 Evaluation Practice of the IG/VE Project**

#### **Group 1**

In this group, questions 5 to 11 were employed to explore specific IG/VE project evaluation practice, such as its methods, participants, time, principles, requirements and how to record and store the information. The questions are as follows:

5. What methods do you use to evaluate projects? (report, questionnaire, interview, observation, etc?)
6. Who will be involved in project evaluation? And who will be responsible for it?
7. When will you carry out evaluation? (baseline, midterm, annual and review?)
8. Why do you do such evaluation at these time periods?
9. What are the principles of the evaluation? (Save the Children documents, project proposals, contracts?)
10. Do the stakeholders have requirements about evaluation methods and time? If yes, what are they?
11. How do you store the information collected by the evaluation? And how do you analyse it?

Save the Children provincial project office staff agreed with two evaluation methods when answering question 5. They are internal and external methods. In the interviews, it is obvious to see that the higher level managers of the organisation pay more attention to external and project general evaluations. The manager of YMBEP raised two external project evaluation activities to show the methods that they applied are interviews, document review and questionnaires; and then generally introduced “*the*

*impact assessment system developed by Save the Children organization, and an impact assessing activity organised by a team involving Save the Children staff from London, Beijing and Tibet.”* In this activity, the team applied “*interview, focus group and field visit*” methods to collect information, and “*formed a report for final annual report of education programme in China*”. On the other hand, the IG/VE project officer and the assistant focus more on internal regular evaluation. They agreed with the methods that were referred to in the question 5, and explained that

*The reports are required every quarter and year. The local school composes individual project report and submits it to the county site office. The county site office staff collect reports from covering project schools, and discover useful information and problems in them, then form a report for prefecture site office manager. After the same process in the prefecture office, then the report goes to Kunming office project officer.*

Besides the methods referred in the question 5, they added further internal evaluation methods as the experience meeting and training workshop.

*Such meetings provide an opportunity for each project to review and share experience and lessons. Furthermore, in our project training workshops, evaluation questionnaires are applied to people involved in the project, including beneficiaries, sometimes children also participate in such evaluations.*

Question 6 was intended to explore the main participants in project evaluation activities. All participants stated that the evaluation participants include beneficiaries, project site offices of each level and Kunming office YMBEP staff. The IG/VE project officer pointed out that “*for external evaluation, the responsible person is the external evaluator; and for internal ones, the project officer is in charge of it*”. One participant of this group also further explained that for project monitoring activities, “*the teacher in charge of individual project is responsible for it*”.

Participants agreed with the time (project stage) referred to in Question 7. A project officer added “*quarterly review*” to it. And the YMBEP manager added that “*in practice, impact assessment happens every two years*” which is required by Save the Children organisation, and “*follow-up site visiting*” by county site office staff every one or two months as monitoring activities.

Question 8 explored the reasons for carrying out evaluation at these time points. Baseline survey is to collect “*original data*” about local situation. Mid-term review can discover weaknesses and problems in order to adjust project work “*with enough time and funds*”. Monitoring activities, such as follow-up site visits can “*find out requirements and problems of an individual project*”. Final evaluation can “*summarise experience and lessons*” for new project development and replication. Save the Children organisation requires implementation of impact assessment every two years for “*reflecting changes which happened for children*”. Moreover, the project annual plan in the proposal for stakeholders requires half-year and annual reports, “*for instance, the European Community has given report format and requirement of the content*”. The requirement from the stakeholders for the mid-term and final project evaluation is recorded in the project log frame which was submitted to them.

For question 9, participants belonging to the higher managing level paid more attention to comprehensive project evaluation principles. They all gave the answer “*log frame*” (a working framework of the proposed project recorded in the proposal submitted to the stakeholders). Additionally, one participant described “*related documents and tools in the GIM are also directing principles*” of the project evaluation. The IG/VE project officer and the assistant explained that in practice, “*the indeed evaluation principle is the project proposal*” composed by local schools and approved by the project offices of each level. One participant explained in details as follows:

*The proposal submitted to the stakeholders just describes an expected number of children who will benefit from the project, and general requirement for mid-term and final evaluations. Because of varied local situations, it is impossible to develop detailed evaluation rules. Thus, based on the GIM documents and requirements from the stakeholders, the IG/VE project Kunming office staff developed proposal and contract models for individual projects. Local schools and communities will participate in the proposal introduction meeting before composing it. Based on the project objectives, the expected outputs and the budget plans in this proposal, local schools or communities can compare and discover problems in time.*

For question 10, participants agreed with the answer that there was “*no requirement about project evaluation methods from the stakeholders*”. There was requirement of evaluation time from them. Generally speaking, the mid-term review should happen in the second project year. And the final evaluation should be carried out in the last year of the project period. And depending on different stakeholders, the content and the time of external evaluation varied.

In answering question 11, participants gave similar replies:

Regarding a questionnaire, the project will have a volunteer to type the data into the computer for database establishment in the future. Project staff usually send questionnaire data to Beijing for analysing by SPSS. Kunming office will keep electronic copy in computer, while original copy in locked boxes. Regarding interview data, the original interview record will be stored in project locked boxes. The project officer will be in charge of analysing it. And usually pieces of it will be used in the reports. One participant commented that “*frequent changing of personnel resulted in problems of work handing-over. Thus some data, especially the ones of early projects had been lost.*”

## Group 2

For this group, questions 3-9 were used to explore current project practices. Similar to the group 1, it covered participation, time, methods, principles, information storing, and evaluation feedback. Questions include:

3. Do you know whether the IG/VE project conduct programme evaluation?
4. Do you involve in project evaluation? To what extent? who do you responsible for?
5. When will the project carry out the evaluation? (baseline, mid-term, annual and final review?)
6. What methods do you use in current project evaluation? (report, questionnaire, interview, observation, etc?)
7. What are the principles of your evaluation work? (requirements from Save the Children Kunming office?)
8. As you know, how to store and analyse the information collected by the evaluation work?
9. Did you get any feedback and reflection after the evaluation? in what way?

All participants of this group answered “yes” for question 3. One of them explained:

*We are asked to site visit each project school every one to two month. Each quarter we must collect progressing reports from schools and submit a report to the higher level site office. And we often receive visitors for project evaluation who come from both internal and external Save the Children organisation.*

When answering question 4, participants made similar answers. All of them participated in most of the IG/VE project evaluation activities in the past. “*I’m in charge of collecting quarter reports from schools; and follow-up visiting schools frequently to discover problems.*” One participant said. “*we often receive external and internal evaluators to project schools for project evaluation, and we provide all related support for them.*” Moreover, all of them referred to the “*experience sharing*

*meeting and workshop*” as a way of participating in the project evaluation. For the person who was responsible for the project evaluation, they agreed with the project officer in Kunming office.

Question 5 was used to explore the time periods of the project evaluation. Participants of the group expressed more focus on the time of submitting project reports. No one talked about project monitoring and external evaluation. *“In the middle and ending stages of project, the project evaluations will be carried out.” “Each quarter, half-year and end of year”* the IG/VE project officer will require project progressing report.

Question 6 required participants to describe evaluation methods. They all talked about report, interview and observation. One participant said: *“sometimes, we will help distributing questionnaires developed by Kunming office staff to each project school.”* Another one talked about the follow-up site visiting: *“I usually talk with local teacher who was in charge of the project and children when I visit the school. And I often observe their training lessons.”*

Question 7 focuses on the evaluation principles in the project evaluation practice. Participants of the group had given same responses as *“requirements of project evaluation work from Kunming project office”* which was provided in the question. *“Usually, as I write report to prefecture site office, I’m required to compare collected data with project proposals and contracts in which the developed working plan and objectives were described.”* Furthermore, one participant added that *“as a government official, the education departments make some standards to examine education development as well. Usually, these standards ask for specific quantitative data”*.

For question 8, participants responded in two ways. Four of them expressed *“no idea”* about the information storing and analysing. Two of them talked about project information storing. *“As I know, the project officer in Kunming office usually invites*

*some volunteers to type the collected data into the computer, and locks the hard copies.” One participant said that “sometimes, we will have chance to discuss the collected information in meetings and workshops”.*

When answering question 9 about feedback, all of participants agreed with “yes”. One participant commented:

*For timely progressing reports, usually we do not receive too much feedback. But for problems raised by the reports, the project officer and the assistant often give feedbacks to us in time and assist us to search out the solutions. The situation is similar in the follow-up site visit activities. At the same time, after each external evaluation there is usually organised a feedback meeting. On the meeting, we can find out the results of the evaluation and their recommendations for improving our work.*

### **4.3.3 Project Evaluation Influence**

#### **Group 1**

This domain just involved one question in the interviews to find out whether the project evaluation influenced project work and how:

12. Do the results of the evaluation affect project management, implementing and replication? If yes, how? (in what way? Any change?)

Participants of the group confirmed that there is influence on project work caused by the project evaluation. The IG/VE project officer emphasized the influence of reports: *“project reports can tell advantages and weaknesses of the project work. Based on them, we can develop working plan for improvement. In this way, we gained more experience and lessons for project replication”.* Furthermore, another participant gave an example as:

*In the mid-term and final review of the Income Generation/Vocational Education*

*project in the last Project Phase (Pilot Phase), we discovered that two main factors worked against the successful IG/VE project. One is lack of marketing skill and time for local teachers. With great pressure of teaching, many teachers who in charge of project management failed to make project profitable. Another one is implementation of the policy of “two free, one subsidy” by Chinese government. After discussion of the result of the evaluation, the YMBEP decided to make a focus shift of the IG/VE project. Income generation part will generally fade away. And the IG/VE project will mainly focus on vocational education.*

The referred policy of “two free, one subsidy” generally means that the Chinese government provides free textbooks to primary and secondary school students who come from rural poor families. Their school incidental expenses are free. And the students can receive subsidy for living expenses. Under such policy, the financial problem has not been the main obstacle that made the children could not go to school. For the school, the evaluation discovered that it was lack of skills and time, the IG project could not earn profit as expected. Hence, the focus of the project has been adjusted according to the evaluation discoveries.

## **Group 2**

For this group, one question was used to explore their views of project evaluation influence:

10. Is there any change about the project caused by the evaluation? If yes, how?

Participants thought the project had been improved after the project evaluation.

*The situation keeps changing, project evaluation always can find out shortages and weaknesses that need to be improved. Project evaluation is important method to direct project adjusting and improving.*

One participant described the school-based and community-based IG/VE project as:

*Some old projects were based in communities. The village people were*

*responsible for managing the project. Then the project evaluation discovered that there was lack of management and business skill and they had little knowledge to teach children vocational skills. This discovery changed the project to be school-based. Most of the new projects were based in local schools and managed by teachers now.*

This is an example that shows clear evidence of how project evaluation influenced and led to change of the project work.

#### **4.3.4 Difficulties and Suggestions**

##### **Group 1**

Questions 13 and 14 were applied to collect participants' opinions about project evaluation generally:

13. Is there any problem with current project evaluation? What is your recommendation about it?

14. Anything else?

For the two questions, five participants expressed concern and opinions. In summary, there are five aspects:

(1) all participants referred to the concern of lacking evaluation skills, especially skills of data analysing and ability of organising a big scale evaluation. For this problem, they raised several suggestions. The manager of Yunnan Programme suggested “*evaluation skill and SPSS tools training workshop*” as a solution for the issue. The YMBEP staff suggested more opportunities for organising evaluations to “*cultivate ability and practice skills*”. The IG/VE project officer pointed out that the project evaluation tools need to be well designed and updated.

(2) Lack of personnel and sufficient funds for the project evaluation. For the total 48 individual projects, the IG/VE project is “*too big to be covered by just several*

*project management staff*". And because of wide distribution of the project schools, great spending on transportation and accommodation demand more funds than ever before. In this case, current project evaluation can just collect related information according to the project objectives. A suggestion for this issue from the YMBEP manager is developing local personnel, for instance, providing evaluation training workshop for local facilitators.

(3) Lack of baseline data to make comparisons was identified as another problem. Participants explained that now the whole YMBEP is getting more and more focus on baseline data collection for any new projects.

(4) Frequent floating employment led to the problem of information handing over. The problem affected the quality and the scale of the project evaluation. The YMBEP deputy manager said: *"as an organisation which implement projects, Save the Children must be responsible for all stakeholders. The organisation will pay more attention to the issue of handing over project information to ensure continuity of the project work"*.

(5) Former lessons showed that few schools and/or communities did not conduct the projects according to the proposals. Suggestion from the YMBEP manager was to *"increase the intensity of the project evaluation"*.

## **Group 2**

Similar to the Group 1, the last two questions were employed to explore views of project evaluation weaknesses, problems and recommendations from site office staff:

11. Do you think there is any problem with existing project evaluation work? What is your recommendation about it?

12. Anything else?

In this group, most of the participants expressed anxiety about funds and personnel for

project evaluation. With development of the IG/VE project, more funds were required for accommodation and travelling when carrying out evaluation activities. They suggested that the YMBEP can budget for more funds in proposals which will be submitted to the stakeholders for project evaluation when applying new investments.

#### **4.3.5 Key Findings of Interviews**

To sum up, interviews in this research collected useful data about the true situation regarding project evaluation. Participants from two groups all confirmed the significance of the project evaluation. From their position, they provided information of project evaluation practices which were very important for this research. Such practices included participation, time, methods, principles, information storing, and evaluation feedback. The key findings of the interviews in this research are as follows:

- ◆ All participants confirmed the significance of the project evaluation in the whole management cycle;
- ◆ The purpose of the project evaluations were discovering problems, gaining experience and lessons, and improving the project work;
- ◆ The participants described that the existing project evaluation methods involved internal and external ways. The methods included observation (follow-up visiting), interview (focus group), case study, questionnaire, experience meeting and workshop, and report. Among these methods, the report was the most used evaluation means.
- ◆ The main participants of the project evaluation were project beneficiaries, staff from management levels. For external project evaluations, the external evaluator took the main responsibility; and for the internal ones, the IG/VE project officer would be responsible for them. For regular monitoring of the individual projects, the local teachers took main responsibility.
- ◆ The time of the project evaluation involved in the baseline survey, the mid-term review, the annual report, the quarter report, the final review, the impact

assessment every two years, and the follow-up visiting went throughout the whole project period. The baseline survey provided original information. The mid-term review discovered the project problems for adjustment. The final review could summarise experiences and lessons. And the follow-up visit could monitor the development of the projects.

- ◆ The participants referred the log frame and the GIM system as the general project evaluation principles. For individual ones, the project proposals were the evaluation principles. The general way of a project evaluation was comparing the performance and achievement with the project objectives.
- ◆ The project stakeholders specified the project evaluation time and the format of the reports which were submitted to them, but set no requirement for the evaluation methods. Some stakeholders did not require project evaluation at all.
- ◆ Regarding the quantitative data, the project would send these to the Beijing office for analysis with the tool SPSS. The qualitative data would be used in the reports and advocating materials. The electronic copies would be stored in the computers, and the hard ones would be locked for archives.
- ◆ The feedback would be provided when problems were discovered by the project management staff.
- ◆ The participants confirmed the existence of the influence of project evaluation. The project evaluation caused adjustment being made to the project.
- ◆ Several concerns were described by the participants of the interviews on the following:

**Table 4.1** Concerns of Current Project Evaluation Performance

<b>Concerns</b>	<b>Proposed solutions</b>
Lack of evaluation skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ providing related training</li> <li>◆ more chance to practice</li> <li>◆ updating and re-designing the evaluation tools</li> </ul>
Lack of management personnel and funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ cultivating local people</li> <li>◆ allocating more budget into the project</li> </ul>

	evaluation for the new projects
Lack of baseline data	◆ ensuring baseline data collecting and storing in the future project management
Problem of the project information handing over	◆ pay more attention to the issue in the future
Some projects did not follow the proposals	◆ strengthen the project monitoring

- ◆ The analysis of the interview data discovered differences between the extent to which the staff from the provincial management level and the staff from the prefecture and county levels understood and participated in the project evaluation.

#### 4.4 Findings of the Questionnaires

There were fourteen persons, who were responsible for managing the individual IG/VE projects, involved in the questionnaire survey for this research. Similarly, the term “participants” will be used to refer to them. These participants included principals, teachers, parents and community members. The schools where the participants come from involved included primary, secondary and special schools.

This questionnaire was designed to collect the information about the project evaluation practice from a viewpoint of the lowest project management level. Similarly, the analysis of questionnaires was based on the four domains including the attitudes towards the project evaluation, practice, influence, and problems and suggestions (see Appendix II for the Questionnaire).

In the questionnaire, questions 1-4 asked for the basic information of the participants.

Questions 1 and 2 collected information about the participants' names and project names. Question 3 showed the focus of the projects which included income generation, vocational education, and student service. According to the responses, there were five income generation focused projects, six vocational education, and three student service. The numbers of the involved projects generally accorded with the ratio they took in the total 48 IG/VE projects.

Question 4 collected the information of the participants' occupation. There were six principals, six teachers, and two parents (one of them also ticked the community member column).

#### **4.4.1 Attitude towards the Project Evaluation**

This domain included question 5 that "To what extent do you think the project evaluation is important in the project management and implementation?" The choices were: Not at all; Important, but not necessary; and Very important and necessary. Two participants chose "Important, but not necessary"; and the other twelve chose "Very important and necessary". The results of this question showed the recognition of the significance of the project evaluation in local schools and communities.

#### **4.4.2 Project Evaluation Practice**

This domain applied questions 6-12 to explore the project evaluation practice in the individual projects.

Question 6: Do you know whether the IG/VE project conduct project evaluation?

Total fourteen participants agree with the answer "Yes". The answer showed the existence of the IG/VE project evaluation.

Question 7: How often do you participate in the project evaluation? The choices were: Not at all, Sometimes, Often, and Always. Six participants chose "Always"; three for

“Often”; and five chose “Sometimes”. The responses showed most of the participants often involved in the project evaluation activities.

Question 8: To what extent are you involved in the project evaluation? The choices were: Not at all, Low, Average, and High. Six participants chose “High”; Seven chose “Average” and only one chose “Low”. No participant chose “Not at all”. According to the answers, the extent to which the local people participated in the project evaluation activities was from average to high.

Question 9: As far as you know, when did the project carry out the evaluation? It was a multiple choice question. The choices were Before the project start, Midterm of the project, After the end of the project, and Any other time. If the answer is yes for the choice “Any other time”, the question required the participants to illuminate. This question was to explore the evaluation time points (stages) of the project evaluation. Nine participants voted for “Before the project start”; eight for “Midterm”; and thirteen for “After”. Moreover, two participants added other time points as: “*during the project period*”; and “*every quarter*”. One participant answered “yes” for the choice of “Any other time”. However, no statement was given. This question showed the baseline survey, the mid-term review and the final report were well-known by the local people, especially the final review.

Question 10 was employed to collect the data about the evaluation methods: As far as you know, how did the project carry out the project evaluation? Like the question 9, this was a multi-choice question. The choice “Report” got eleven responses; “Questionnaire” got six; “Interview” gained twelve; with eleven for “Observation”. One participant stated that “*oral reporting in telephone*” was also a project evaluation method.

Question 11: Did you get any feedback and reflection after the evaluation? (If no, please go to question 13) Eight participants chose “Yes”; and six voted “No”. Among

the six participants who chose “No”, two were community members and the other four were teachers. All principals chose “Yes”. It showed that in the project evaluation activities, the feedback was not comprehensive.

Similar to question 10, question 12 was a multi-choice question. This question was aimed to explore the feedback methods: If yes (for question 11), in what way? The choices were Evaluation feedback meeting, Report, Written feedback, Oral feedback, and Any other method. If the answer is yes for the choice “Any other method”, the question asked for a comment. The eight participants who chose “Yes” in the last question answered this question. “Feedback meetings” got three responses; “Report” got none; “Written feedback” got three; and “Oral feedback” got five. When analysing the responses, the researcher discovered the column “Evaluation feedback meeting” was chosen only by the principals. It reflected the lack of the project resources, because it was impossible to cover all the beneficiaries and management staff in the project evaluation feedback activities.

#### **4.4.3 Project Evaluation Influence**

In this domain, there were two questions exploring changes and influence caused by the project evaluation.

Question 13: Is there any change happened in the project which is caused by the project evaluation? (If no, please go to question 15) Eleven participants chose “Yes”; and three chose “No”. A community member voted “No”. The result revealed that some project beneficiaries and management persons did not feel any change in the projects after the project evaluation.

Question 14 collected information about what the changes were: If yes (for question 13), what aspects of the project are reflecting the change? This was also a multi-choice question. “Project planning” got three responses; “Project

implementation” got six; “Project management” got eight; “Project evaluation” got one; “Project follow-up” got six; “Project finance” got six; and “Project replication” got six. No statement for any other aspects. The result showed that from the viewpoint of the low ranking management persons, the project evaluation influenced the project management greatly.

#### **4.4.4 Problems and Suggestions**

The domain included two questions to explore the concerns of the project evaluation and suggestions from the participants. However, most of them left blank for the last two questions. In the fourteen questionnaires, just one participant expressed concerns as: *“lack of human resource and time for follow-up monitoring activities”*.

#### **4.4.5 Key Findings of the Questionnaires**

To sum up, the questionnaire collected important information about the IG/VE project evaluation from the local lowest management persons involved in the individual projects. It provided an additional source of the information for this research. The key findings of the questionnaires were:

- ◆ The participants recognised the significance and the existence of the project evaluation in the IG/VE project.
- ◆ Most of the participants were often involved in the project evaluation. The extent to which they participated was fairly high.
- ◆ The baseline survey, the mid-term review and the final report were well-known by the local people, especially the final review.
- ◆ The participants chose the report, the questionnaire, the interview and observation as the main evaluation methods. Oral reporting was an additional method added by a participant.
- ◆ The feedback from the project evaluation was not comprehensive.
- ◆ The methods of providing the feedback included meetings, written and oral ways. Not all the project management persons could be involved in the feedback

meetings.

- ◆ Some participants did not feel any influence created by the project evaluation.
- ◆ For the participants who could feel the influence, the biggest changes happened in the project management.

## 4.5 Summary

In this chapter, research findings and analysis were presented based on the three research methods. They are findings of document analysis, findings of interviews and findings of questionnaires. The consolidated findings of this research are:

**Table 4.2** Research Consolidated Findings

(“I” refers to the interviews participants from provincial, prefecture and county management levels; “Q” refers the questionnaire participants from local schools and communities)

Intention	Action
<p>The project evaluation should be in line with the proposal submitted to the stakeholders and the GIM system.</p> <p>The evaluation plan: baseline survey, project monitoring, reporting system, performance appraisal system, mid-term review, the GIM report, and final evaluation</p>	<p>I: the existing project evaluation was in line with the evaluation plan from the proposal and the GIM system.</p>
<p>The stakeholders specified the timing and format of the report</p>	<p>The report showed that it followed the requirements.</p>
<p>Some stakeholders did not require evaluation of the IG/VE project</p>	
<p>The general method for the project</p>	

evaluation was to compare the achievements with the objectives	
The evaluation timing: baseline, mid-term, and final.	I: baseline survey, mid-term review, quarterly report, annual report, final review, follow-up visit, but the old projects did not carry out baseline survey; Q: baseline survey, mid-term review, and final review.
The evaluation methods: report and tools	I: interview, observation, questionnaire, report. The report was used most, but it was simple and general; Q: report, questionnaire, interview and observation.
The evaluation principles for the individual projects: project proposal (especially the timeline and developing plan) and the eight indicators in the manual.	I: Project proposals;
The evaluation tools in the manual	I: newly designed, and will be applied in future
Evaluation information storage	I: quantitative data would be send to Beijing office to analyse with the SPSS; qualitative data would be used in reports and advocating materials; hard copies would be locked; electronic copies would be stored in computer;
Feedback of the project evaluation	I: feedback for the problems discovered in the evaluations; and the methods included written materials and skill supporting; Q: feedback was not comprehensive. The

	methods included meetings, written and oral ways. Not all the project management persons could be involved in the feedback meetings
Influence of the project evaluation	I: adjustment of the project; Q: some felt no influence; some saw changes on the project management.

In the project evaluation, the extent to which the management staff from provincial, prefecture and county levels participated in was higher than that of the local persons who were responsible for the individual projects. The discussion of findings and the conclusion will be given in next chapter.

# Chapter Five

## Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations based on the results of the research. The first section shows the summary of the research findings. The next one deals with the discussion and implications of the research. Then, the conclusions and recommendations are provided, based on the discussion and implications. The final section throws some light on future research opportunities.

### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The main objective of this study was to explore the gap between intention and actual practice in the evaluation implementation related to projects in the *Save the Children China* Income Generation/Vocational Education programme in Yunnan Province China.

#### 5.1.1 Summary of Project Evaluation Intention

Based on the analysis of the document evidences, the stakeholders did not specify requirements for project evaluations. In this research, the analysed proposal which was submitted to European Committee just described a general evaluation plan for the whole programme. And the analysis of the report which was composed by the IG/VE project for a stakeholder showed that sometimes, there was no requirement for any project evaluation at all. However, some stakeholders required reporting time and

format. On the other hand, an internal organisation evaluation framework was provided by Save the Children UK. It was named as GIM. The document *Guideline for Global Impact Assessment* (Save the Children UK, 2002) showed that because of varied local context, it is impossible to specify evaluation principles for individual projects. Thus, the GIM was also a comprehensive organisational evaluation work framework.

In practice, the proposal of an individual project was the main evaluation principle. However, the analysis of such a proposal showed that there was no clear project evaluation working plan. Regarding evaluation, the objective and the timeline in the proposal became important evaluation indicators. Currently, the IG/VE project officer has developed a project management manual. The manual described the general evaluation method as comparing the achievements with the objectives. This manual also provided a proposal format and some evaluation tools. There was no requirement for the information storage, analysis and feedback for the evaluation in the project management documents.

To sum up, because of varied local context, it is impossible to specify evaluation principles for individual projects. The stakeholders did not provide requirements for current specific project evaluations. The existing project evaluation principle was the proposal of each individual project.

### **5.1.2 Summary of Project Evaluation Action**

In practical IG/VE project evaluations, the general evaluation plan from the proposal which was approved by the stakeholders and the general evaluation methods from the GIM system embodied in the project evaluation activities. An interviewee explained this as answering the question about evaluation principles: “based on the GIM documents and requirements from the stakeholders, the IG/VE project Kunming office staff developed proposal and contract models for individual projects as

evaluation principles.”

The participants of the interviews also confirmed the project proposal was the main principle in actual individual project evaluations. The finding of the questionnaires showed that report was the main evaluation method in current project evaluations. The other methods included interview, observation, and questionnaire. According to the general evaluation plan described in the proposal of stakeholders, the baseline survey, regular monitoring, mid-term review, and final review were required. Actually, the interviewees of this research explained that except few old projects did not collect baseline information; the baseline survey, mid-term review, quarterly report, annual report, final review, follow-up visit (as regular monitoring) were carried out.

Even though there were no requirements for the information storage and feedback; the project officer locked the hard copies of both qualitative and quantitative evaluation information. The quantitative one would be sent to Beijing Office for analysing with SPSS; and the qualitative one would be used in reports. At the same time, the analysis of existing project documents showed that there were feedbacks for the current project evaluation activities. However, the responses of the questionnaires showed that it was not comprehensive to cover all management persons from each project level. Furthermore, the responses from the interviews suggested that the existing project evaluation influenced the project management and development in the past. For instance, a participant of the interviews provided an example that the IG/VE project decided to shift the focus on vocational education rather than income generation after evaluations. In contrast, several participants of the questionnaires denied the existence of the influence which was caused by the project evaluations.

To sum up, the current project evaluation principle was the project proposals. The general evaluation method was to compare project achievement with objectives in the proposal. The report was the main instrument for collecting evaluation data. The collected information was stored and mainly used for reporting and advocacy.

## **5.2 Discussion and Implications**

The discussion that follows turns to the issues raised in the literature review, in relation to the themes that arose from the findings of this researcher in order to address the research questions that this study based on.

What is the importance of evaluation?

What are the requirements of programme evaluation from the stakeholders?

What are the current evaluation practices of the IG/VE projects?

What is the gap between the intention and actual practice?

### **5.2.1 The Importance of Evaluation**

For the first research question, the responses of the participants of both interviews and questionnaires were similar. They agreed that project evaluation is very vital for project development. Just as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (1996) and the Health Canada organisation (2005) described, the purpose of the evaluation is to analyse the process of the implementation and the impact or changes; and then identify problems and important lessons for improving future projects. Thorndike (1971) also emphasized that the concern of adoption or modification of the programme in decision making made the evaluation important. The perspectives of the participants in the interviews agreed that the evaluation can help discover problems, cumulative experience and get lessons, which will ensure successful project replication. As Mukasa and Sarah (2002) pointed out, the findings of the study confirmed that there was awareness that project evaluation played important role in making a project to be successful in the organisation.

### 5.2.2 Requirements of Programme Evaluation

The second research questions required this research find out the requirements for the project evaluation from the stakeholders and the internal organisation policy. According to Glass (1987), evaluation is for a restricted audience. Stakeholders are the audiences of a programme evaluation. However, after analysing the intention documents, the researcher just abstracted some general evaluation plans and frameworks, rather than the specific evaluation requirements for individual projects. The interviewees noted that this was because of varied local context. Furthermore, it was impossible for the stakeholders to get familiar with all sponsored projects and provide evaluation requirements. As Davies (2001) noted, large scales of NGOs lead to hierarchical structures, which result in various objectives and evaluation strategies. Large international NGOs may have a large group of corporation partners (including implementing partners and stakeholders). In this case, the NGO organisation has objectives and evaluation strategies at each level; while their partners will in turn have their own ones. Fowler (1997) suggested that for large international NGOs, the only manageable way is that various objectives are clearly nested. In another word, the local objectives are detailed version of the macro-level ones, and then as judging the smallest units of a project, it can be applied as a raw material for judging the larger units that they belong to. However, it is complicated to do so.

The documentary evidences and data from the interviews showed that current project evaluation principle was proposals of individual IG/VE projects. Such proposals were composed by local schools and communities. In the newly developed *IG/VE project management manual*, Su and Xu (2008) explained the general evaluation method is comparing the achievements with the objectives in the proposal. However, as Davies (2001) suggested, in the NGOs, there are some widely recognised vague objectives which are difficult to identify their realisation, such as empowerment, organisational strengthening and development of the society. The value of what has been achieved

usually based on the local context and the history. Dart (1999) explained this that many important development are not measurable. Additionally, Su and Xi (2008) developed a model of the proposal for individual projects; and provided specific evaluation indicators and evaluation tools for different focused IG/VE projects. The completion of this manual showed the emphasis on the project evaluation from Save the Children UK organisation, and could be viewed as a specific direction of project evaluation. However, the effectiveness of this manual still needs further observation and exploration in future.

### **5.2.3 Current Project Evaluation Practice**

As Goslin and Edwards (1995), Platt (1996), Broughton and Hampshire (1997), Barton (1997), Rubin (1998), Roche (1999) noted, a number of NGOs have developed their own guidelines of the programme evaluation. For Save the Children UK organisation in this study, since there were no specific requirements from the stakeholders, the project staff established an evaluation working system in practice. The data from the interviews and the questionnaires showed that the project evaluation methods could be divided into two domains. They were internal and external evaluations. An interviewee explained that the internal evaluations included project monitoring and review; and the external evaluations mainly referred to the review. In actual evaluation activities, the methods of observation (follow-up visit), interview (focus group), case study, questionnaire, experience sharing meeting and workshop, and report were applied to collect data. Existing project evaluation was most relied on the method of report, especially for the project regular monitoring. Fowler (1997) pointed out that one problem of NGOs' programme evaluation is the limitation of the instruments which the NGOs used to evaluate the programme. Similarly, in this research of Save the Children's IG/VE project, the analysis of a report which was randomly sampled presented that the content of the report was general record of transactions rather than analysis. A participant of the interviews added that some reports would raise difficulties that the individual project came

across; while the researcher also found feedbacks for these difficulties in document evidence.

Regarding the extent to which the project management persons participated in current project evaluations, the collected data indicated that Save the Children UK, as Guijt (1998) noted, paid more attention to the methods that encouraging participation. Hence the extent was fairly high. However, the evidence from the analysis of the questionnaires showed that the low ranking management persons just arranged accommodation for the evaluation activities; and furthermore, they would not receive any feedbacks of the evaluations, especially for the external evaluations. The findings suggested that current participation of project evaluations was not comprehensive.

The findings of this research presented that the IG/VE project had established a project evaluation timetable. The baseline survey, mid-term review, and final review were conducted for most of the existing individual projects. Additionally, the annual report, quarterly report, follow-up visit through out the project period and every two-year impact assess (which was in relation to the GIM system) were carried out. Regarding the baseline survey, a participant of the interviews raised the concern of losing of some baseline information. This complaint was similar to other NGOs. Mansfield (1996), Riddell et al. (1997), Oakley et al. (1998), and Evison (1999) pointed out that common complaint of absence of the baseline information can be found in universal NGOs and donor meta-evaluations / synthesis studies. Goyder et al. (1997) explained that it was mainly caused by less attention paid on the baseline information collection at the beginning stage. And few NGOs proposed the reason that the baseline information has been lost or forgotten during the long project period, or the evaluation teams can not access to it. Regarding this problem, the interviewee proposed similar reasons as no baseline survey was conducted for some old projects; or the problem of information handing over. This issue showed a shortage of the project management.

The analysis of the project management documents showed that there were no requirements for the storage, analysis and usage of the project evaluation information. In practice, the IG/VE project staff locked all hard copies of the information, and stored electronic one in computer. The quantitative data was analysed with SPSS; and the qualitative one was quoted in reports that were submitted to the stakeholders and organisational advocating materials. As pointed out by the interviewees of this research, the efficiency of current project information management was low, so was the usage. In addition, the participants of the interviews also raised the problem of lack of evaluation skills which included the skill of information analysis.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) (1996), one of the purposes of the evaluation is to identify problems and important lessons for improving future projects. The organisation Health Canada (2005) also stated improving the delivery of services to increase quality and improve spending of resources as an important purpose of the evaluation. Regarding the influence caused by the current project evaluation in this research, the high management levels recognised the existence of the influence and raised examples. However, several low ranking management persons who were the indeed beneficiaries expressed in questionnaires that they felt no influence after evaluations. This finding reflected a low extent to which the project beneficiaries participated in the project evaluation issues. The fact that the beneficiaries could not feel the influence showed that the current project evaluation work still needed to be improved.

Furthermore, the analysis of the records of the project evaluation activities revealed some shortages of the high organisation management. In 2006, an external project review was carried out to answer the questions which were raised by the Save the Children UK. The questions were “Should Save the Children has an Income Generation programme?” and “Should the IG/VE programme be school based or community based?” Gosling and Edwards (2007) pointed out that it is not appropriate to carry out a programme review as it is to prove the validity of a decision which was

made on the basis of other reason, such as whether to stop a programme. They further suggested that in such cases, instead of project review, some forms of investigation can be conducted for making decision. According to their statement, this external review of the IG/VE project was inappropriate, as it asked the question of whether Save the Children should continue to carry out the Income Generation focused projects. At the same time, the documents of project evaluation activities recorded an impact assessment workshop in Beijing in 2006. This workshop planned to establish a monitoring framework for educational projects in China by the end of April of 2007. However, at the date of this research, this planned format has not yet been finalised. This issue reflected low efficiency of the organisation and little attention was received by the project evaluation.

#### **5.2.4 Gap between the Intention and Actual Practice**

At the beginning, this research planned to identify the gap between the IG/VE project evaluation intention and practice. In literature, Kaufman and his colleagues proposed the purpose of the evaluation is to compare the results with the intentions. And the organisation Health Canada (2005) also noted that one of the purposes of the evaluation is to confirm the action conforming to the intention. However, since the stakeholders did not provide any specific requirements for the IG/VE project evaluations, it was impossible to identify the gap between the intention and action of current project evaluation. Recently, the IG/VE project developed a management manual as mentioned before. This manual might play an important role in the project evaluation in the future. In this case, this research paid more attention to the investigation of existing IG/VE project evaluation performance to discover possible shortages for improvement according to related literature.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The project evaluation plays a vital role in the project development. It can uncover problems and provide information for project adjustment and improvement. Hence, as mentioned in Chapter one, the objective of this research is to investigate the evaluation performance of a NGO's educational programme in China. Based on this objective, the conclusions of current IG/VE project evaluation performance are described as follows:

Because of the complex project context, the stakeholders and Save the Children UK organisation did not specified requirements for the project evaluation. The current evaluation system was established by the IG/VE project. The fact that the scale of the IG/VE project was large; the development was too fast; and the project lacked skilled project management staff resulted in low efficiency of current project evaluations. Even the higher organisational management staff recognised the significance of the project evaluation; the current project evaluation was conducted passively. Compared with other aspects of the project work, the project evaluation received less attention.

The current project evaluation system was established by the IG/VE project in practice. The project evaluations mainly relied on the method of report. However, it was over formalistic and could not present essential progress and problems. The participation of the project evaluation activities was not inclusive. The ways of evaluation data managing and using were over simplistic and not efficient. The existing IG/VE project evaluation system was effectual to a certain extent in terms of providing information for project adjustment, and for investigating local requirements. However, it need more emphasis and to be improved in future. Moreover, the problems of the organisational management and frequent personnel change also endangered the possibility of high quality IG/VE project evaluation performance.

However, under the complicated circumstance of the project, the partners, especially government departments who involved in the project might be defensive about the criticism on the project evaluation. It is hoped the result of this research will be used to improve the IG/VE project evaluation, and in this way, to improve the quality of the programme and local education.

The data of this research were collected from both the project documents and twenty-five respondents. All of them are involved in the management cycle of Save the Children UK's Income Generation/Vocational Education project in China. The documents analysed in this research included project evaluation intention files and the actual records of occurred project evaluation activities including reports. At the same time, in order to form a data triangulation of the occurring project evaluation performance, eleven project staff from high management levels participated in the interviews; and fourteen low ranking managements persons responded to the questionnaires. The data collected by both the methods of interview and questionnaire formed a longitudinal picture for the existing project evaluation performance.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

The study revealed that existing IG/VE project evaluation system was effectual to a certain extent in terms of providing information for project adjustment, and for investigating local requirements. However, it was formalistic and could not present essential progress and problems of projects. Hence, the existing evaluation system needed to be improved. In this case, some meaningful and practical recommendations can be made to the Yunnan Programme Manager, YMBEP Manager, and the IG/VE project officer from Save the Children UK China Programme Kunming Office:

- ◆ Even though the organisation had an awareness of the significance of the project evaluation, more attention and resources need to be allocated to the evaluation

practice in the future.

- ◆ In order to improve the project evaluation, more related skills and funds are needed for the IG/VE project.
- ◆ In stead of the report, the project evaluation should use multiple methods to collect information.

## **5.5 Further Research**

Limited by the time, ability and the scale of this study, the researcher did not get access to the other groups of the IG/VE project participants and beneficiaries, such as the stakeholders, the cooperation government partners, the common community members and the most important beneficiaries, the children. In further studies, the opinions and data should be collected from them to form a full picture of the project evaluation. In addition, the findings revealed that the design of this study was not practical enough. Further studies should design carefully in relation to the Chinese cultural thinking and local context, especially for the data collection instruments.

On the other hand, since this descriptive research mainly focused on the project evaluation practice, the further studies may throw more light on the quality and outcomes of the project evaluation in the future.

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# Appendix I

## Interview Schedule

Potential interview groups: (1) 5 Save the Children staff and managers (at provincial level);

(2) 2 Prefecture project staff (government official) (who is in charge of Education Bureau responsibility as well) (at prefecture level) (depends on situation);

(3) 4 County site project staff (project manager & assistant)

(Note: no children involved)

### General questions

Name\Occupation\Position in the project

Project introduction

### Save the Children Project staff and managers

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What do you think about programme evaluation?</li><li>2. Do you think it is important in programme management, implementing and replication? If yes, could you give some example?</li><li>3. How much should evaluation take in programme management?</li><li>4. How much attention did you pay on it?</li><li>5. What methods do you use to evaluate project? (report, questionnaire, interview, observation, etc?)</li><li>6. Who will be involved in project evaluation? And who will be responsible for it?</li><li>7. When will you carry out evaluation? (baseline, midterm, annual and review?)</li><li>8. Why do you do such evaluation at these time periods?</li><li>9. What are the principles of these evaluation works? (SC documents, project proposals, contracts?)</li><li>10. Do the stakeholders have requirements about evaluation methods and time? If yes, what are they?</li></ol>	
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<p>11. How do you store the information collected by the evaluation work? And how to analyse it?</p> <p>12. Do the results of the evaluation affect project management, implementing and replication? If yes, how? (in what way? Any change?)</p> <p>13. Is there any problem with current project evaluation work? What is your recommendation about it?</p> <p>14. Anything else?</p>	
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**Prefecture project staff (government official) and County site project staff**

<p>1. What do you think about programme evaluation?</p> <p>2. Do you think it is important in programme management, implementing and replication? If yes, could you give some example?</p> <p>3. Do you know whether the IG/VE project conduct programme evaluation?</p> <p>4. Do you involve in project evaluation? To what extent? who do you responsible for?</p> <p>5. When will the project carry out evaluation? (baseline, midterm, annual and review?)</p> <p>6. What methods do you use in current project evaluation? (report, questionnaire, interview, observation, etc?)</p> <p>7. What are the principles of your evaluation work? (SC Kunming office requirements?)</p> <p>8. As you know, how to store and analyse the information collected by the evaluation work?</p> <p>9. Did you get any feedback and reflection after the evaluation? in what way?</p> <p>10. Is there any change about the project caused by these evaluation works? If yes, how?</p> <p>11. Do you think there is any problem with current project evaluation work?</p> <p>12. What is your recommendation about it?</p> <p>13. Anything else?</p>	
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## Appendix II

### Survey Questionnaire of IG/VE programme evaluation (English and Chinese Version)

1. Name:
2. Name of project or project school
3. Focus of the project
  - Income Generation
  - Vocational Education
  - Student Service
4. Position in the project (please tick)
  - head teacher
  - teacher
  - community member
  - parent
5. To what extent do you think the project evaluation is important in programme management and implementation?
  - Not at all      Important, but not necessary      Very important and necessary
  -
6. Do you know whether the IG/VE project conduct programme evaluation?
  - Yes                       No
7. How often do you participate in the project evaluation?
  - Not at all      Sometimes      Often      Always
  -
8. To what extent do you involve in project evaluation?
  - Not at all      Low      Average      High
  -
9. As you know when did the project carry out evaluation? (Please tick appropriate one or more than one answers)
  - Before the project start
  - Midterm of the project

After the end of the project

Any other time? Yes  No

If yes, please state: \_\_\_\_\_

10. As you know how the project did carry out the project evaluation? (Please tick appropriate one or more than one answers)

Report

Questionnaire

Interview

Observation

Any other method? Yes  No

If yes, please state: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Did you get any feedback and reflection after the evaluation? (If no, please go to question 13)

Yes

No

12. If yes, in what way? (Please tick appropriate one or more than one answers)

Evaluation feedback meeting

Report

Written feedback

Oral feedback

Any other method? Yes  No

If yes, please state: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Is there any change about the project caused by the evaluation works? (If no, please go to question 15)

Yes

No

14. If yes, what aspects of the project reflect the change? (Please tick appropriate one or more than one answers)

Project planning

Project implementation

Project management

Project evaluation

Project follow-up

Project finance

Project replication

Any other aspect? Yes  No

If yes, please state: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you think there is any problem with current project evaluation work? What is your suggestion about the project evaluation?

16. Anything else?