

Chapter 13: An evaluation framework



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The aims are:

- To discuss the conceptual, practical and ethical issues involved in evaluation.
- To introduce and explain the DECIDE framework.

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DECIDE: a framework to guide evaluation

- Determine the *goals*.
- Explore the *questions*.
- Choose the evaluation *approach* and *methods*.
- Identify the *practical issues*.
- Decide how to deal with the *ethical issues*.
- Evaluate, analyze, interpret and present the *data*.

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Determine the goals

- What are the high-level goals of the evaluation?
- Who wants it and why?
- The goals influence the approach used for the study.
- Some examples of goals:
 - Identify the best metaphor on which to base the design.
 - Check to ensure that the final interface is consistent.
 - Investigate how technology affects working practices.
 - Improve the usability of an existing product .

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Explore the questions

- *All* evaluations need goals & questions to guide them.
- E.g., the goal of finding out why many customers prefer to purchase paper airline tickets rather than e-tickets can be broken down into sub-questions:
 - What are customers' attitudes to these new tickets?
 - Are they concerned about security?
 - Is the interface for obtaining them poor?
- What questions might you ask about the design of a cell phone?

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Choose the evaluation approach & methods

- The evaluation *approach* influences the *methods* used, and in turn, how data is collected, analyzed and presented.
- E.g. field studies typically:
 - Involve observation and interviews.
 - Do not involve controlled tests in a laboratory.
 - Produce qualitative data.

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Identify practical issues

For example, how to:

- Select users
- Stay on budget
- Stay on schedule
- Find evaluators
- Select equipment

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Decide about ethical issues

- Develop an informed consent form
- Participants have a right to:
 - Know the goals of the study;
 - Know what will happen to the findings;
 - Privacy of personal information;
 - Leave when they wish;
 - Be treated politely.

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Evaluate, interpret & present data

- The approach and methods used influence how data is evaluated, interpreted and presented.
- The following need to be considered:
 - Reliability: can the study be replicated?
 - Validity: is it measuring what you expected?
 - Biases: is the process creating biases?
 - Scope: can the findings be generalized?
 - Ecological validity: is the environment influencing the findings? - i.e. Hawthorn effect.

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Key points

- There are many issues to consider before conducting an evaluation study.
- These include the goals of the study, the approaches and methods to use, practical issues, ethical issues, and how the data will be collected, analyzed and presented.
- The DECIDE framework provides a useful checklist for planning an evaluation study.

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A project for you ...

- Find an evaluation study from the list of URLs on this site or one of your own choice.
- Use the DECIDE framework to analyze it.
- Which paradigms are involved?
- Does the study report address each aspect of DECIDE?
- Is triangulation used? If so, how?
- On a scale of 1-5, where 1 = poor and 5 = excellent, how would you rate this study?

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