# A Proposed Blueprint Model Towards the Evaluation of Educational System in Iran

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**Abstract**

The pursuit of quality gave rise to the concept of Iran Universities as learning organizations. Iran Universities must have the capacity to learn if they are to survive the demands and requirements of the emerging times. This includes liberating traditional methodologies that are anchored on positivism and seemingly dependent on technical expertise. In this article, the author underscored the need, 1) to develop, present and describe proposed model for training and education in Iran: 2) to discuss the components and the dimension of each of these components of the proposed model: 3) to suggest a general frame for data collection of each of the components and dimensions of the model; and 4) to discuss the management implications of evaluative results, when a problem emerges. This model includes five main components. The first refers to the trainees, evaluator participants and students. The second refers to the evaluator in general, including implementation and operations. The third component includes the effects of the evaluation on the trainees, students or participants. The fourth looks at the social impact of the evaluator.The fifth family which refers to the students' parents.

**Keywords:** Stakeholder, Component, HEIs, Model, Evaluation

## 1. Introduction

There are compelling reasons for proposing a stakeholder friendly education model. The term "stakeholder" may be defined as a person who is concerned with and affected by the quality of services and products of an educational organization or institution .

A stakeholder of a higher learning institution may belong to any of the following groups: professors, students, department chairs, presidents/rectors, members of the board of regents/trustees, deans, directors, alumni, government officials like those from the ministry of education, the commission of vocational education, the commission of higher education, the ministry of budget and management, and the public —the taxpayers. These sectors share a common interest - their concern on the quality of outputs, graduates or products of and services provided by the educational and training institutions .

Given the opportunity, many of the stakeholders would wish to be involved in the evaluation. Their participation in the evaluation is an opportunity for them to share their values and to create their own realities on and interpretation of the evaluator. Furthermore, a feeling of importance, empowerment and ownership of the evaluator under study may happen as a consequence of dynamic participation .

There are other reasons for advocating a stakeholder proposed model. To reiterate, these are as follows:

1. A stakeholder evaluation is a user-friendly model, which does not require technical training to participate in the exercise.

2. Participation and involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation would enable them to know more about the organization, learn in the organization with its problems and politics, and subsequently contribute to a dynamic learning organization.

Mass assumption to be considered in this project is that an advocacy that starts as a blueprint includes a tacit invitation for others in the field of training and evaluation, including the stakeholders, to contribute their ideas in shaping the model - and this is in line with the idea of participation and teamwork in the tradition of system evaluation.

## 2. Methodology

Both survey and descriptive research methods were used in this study. Using the survey method, the researcher

personally compiled and analyzed the previous evaluations models, then resulted to the presented model.

The components of this model were distributed among fifty (50) students and thirty (30) educational administrators who responded accordingly.

## 3. Results and Analysis

### *3.1 Education and Evaluation Since 1960's*

The public clamor for accountability of money spent in education gave rise to a body of knowledge in education, which includes a procession of models. While this started in the USA, the clamor reverberated throughout the world .

Models that came about were the types of Stufflebearn's CIPP (Writhen and Sanders, 1975), Stake's "Countenance of evaluation in Education" (Teachers Record, also in Writhen and Sanders, 1975), Proves' "Discrepancy Model" (Proves Discrepancy Model, 1982, and Writhen and Sanders 1975) and Screven's Formative and Summative evaluation (Popham, 1974 and Worthenand Sanders, 1975). Each of these models, including that of Tyler of the pre-World War II vintage tacitly assumes an expert evaluator as provider of data to school manager.

Despite the preponderance of the then proposed models in the late sixties and the seventies, cries for "quality" in education became increasingly audible and disturbing in the eighties and the nineties. The once familiar and stable grounds upon which schools, especially higher education institutions (HEI), stand became shaky and unreliable. HEIs, including those in Iran, started the search for attributes of quality in what they do and in their outputs. Definitions of "quality" became, it seems, more slippery and elusive even as more talks about it intensified across time .

In 1990s, HEIs almost abruptly started talking as though universities and colleges were business establishments. The literature on quality education started to be flooded by business concepts and jargon like customer or client satisfaction, quality control (euphemistically called quality assurance) and the like. Accordingly, the clients of HEIs are students. Lately the concept client was extended, as the proponent of this model did in one of his papers presented to the "Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities" National Conference on Quality Assurance (Ochave, 1996), to include others in the organization, optimally extending the client concept to include a configuration of interactive relationships in the organization, in concrete terms, for example, a professor of higher mathematics is a satisfied client of the professor in basic mathematics if the set of students in higher mathematics who passed through the professor in basic mathematics are ready for the course in higher mathematics. This foreshadows the concept of internal customer within an organization .

Lately, HEIs are evidently making up from years of lethargy. The traditional distance long held by universities vis-à-vis the community is beginning to disappear. The change is brought about by a host of factors, among them are the information and communication technology, the competition from other academic institutions, and non-academic institutions as sources of knowledge and learning, and the decreasing subsidy for state HEIs. The burden of proving quality as an attribute in their services and products had definitely shifted to HEIs. Customer satisfaction and continuous improvement are almost abruptly valued in the culture of the academe .

### *3.2 The Pursuit of Quality in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)*

The pursuit of quality gave rise to interrelated terms like evaluation, assessment, accreditation, quality assurance, audit, and the like. At the turn of the Twentieth century, quality assurance was more often used in national and international conferences on accreditation. There is more to quality assurance than plain accreditation; that is, it is distinct from quality control. In quality assurance, quality is assumed from the very beginning extending throughout the process until the student finishes schooling. Schools, and HEIs for this matter, do not have a system of• recalling students should they turn out to be incompetent after graduation. A factory can reject products at the end of production line when found defective, and even recall those already in the market. To date this is unheard of in the case of schools, including universities. No university has recalled its graduates on grounds of incompetence (Ochave, 1994).

One promising option in the pursuit of quality is the emerging consideration of universities as learning organizations. The continuing existence of universities seems to depend on its ability to learn. Universities may survive the demands and requirements of the emerging times if it has the capacity to learn. This partly means shedding off traditional modes of thinking, viewing problems, working, and managing. This includes liberating traditional evaluation methodologies that are anchored on positivism and are seemingly dependent on the technical expertise of the evaluator .

The flow of information and knowledge brought about by the advances in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) seems to have prepared the soil for more democratic processes to go beyond the rhetoric's on "changes" and "reinventions". Evidently, universities and training evaluators are among those influenced by ICT. Nowadays, stakeholders cannot be held on suspended ignorance since information goes around almost instantaneously. They wish to

participate and be involved. Collective thinking, consensus, teamwork, empowerment ,Participation and concrete action .and group decision must be in the culture of academics in addition to leadership, networking and partnership. These all contribute to learning in organization. Stakeholders will see these in operation when the proposed model is applied .

The didactics of classical evaluation presupposes an expert evaluator and an "objective reality about education out there to be discovered". To open the opportunity to learn in organization evaluation must be liberated from this premise.

The need to develop and present a stakeholder-friendly proposed model in the light of the developments like "learning organizations", "quality assurance" and "empowerment" is underscored considering the following :

1. Accountability and audit will consistently and increasingly be required and made visible as sources of funding gets scarcer .

2. Managers will need the evaluative "data" for management decisions with respect to the development of the organization (choosing course alternatives).

3. Quality and quality assurance are in the mantle of consciousness of the stakeholders including faculty and staff in academic organizations who when empowered in the evaluation process would help organizations learn .

4. Stakeholders are learners themselves in the organization, and wish to create evaluation realities about the organization .

5. The need to go beyond mere description of events in evaluation, and the importance of developing standards to judge the quality of an evaluation. In this case "standards" should not be equated with monotony and routine but are dynamic expectations of stakeholders of the evaluator .

Then, too, an intuitively appealing process decreases technicalities and is lighter to undertake especially when done in a collective manner. This model is a non-technical model. Stakeholders of different background may participate in the evaluation process. They will raise expectations, create standards and render judgment on actual events in the evaluation.

In summary, when stakeholders participate in the evaluation they are able to comprehend better the business of training, educating, teaching, and learning. There will also be instances when they will be constructors of reality by consensus as when they define standards in the process of evaluation .

## 4. Findings and Discussion

Hereunder is the blueprint of the model. Included in the presentation and discussion are its components and dimensions. Also presented are the data gathering matrices and the other processes to be used to bring the evaluation exercise to completion. It is a blueprint because the user may flesh it out .

The proposed model is used in evaluating training or a curricular evaluator. The evaluation maybe a social, an agricultural or an educational endeavor. Stakeholders may wish to be involved in the process .

### *4.1 The Components of the Model*

As presented in Exhibit No. I, the model has five main components. These are the A component which includes the students or trainees or participants. These are the beneficiaries of the evaluation. The B component composes the evaluators and operations. The C component which is on the effects of the evaluation. The D component which is on the social impact of the evaluation. The geometric shapes of each of these components imply their respective attributes. Round circles for trainees as they are malleable and could be potentially shaped. Diamond for evaluation me and operations for certain decision points thereat are created and made by the implementers of the evaluation me. Round again for the effects for this pertains to what happened to the trainees after the evaluation. Jagged and irregular shape for the social impact for this is remote and may be difficult to trace in a one-to-one correspondence as the direct result of the evaluation .

Component A refers to the trainees, evaluation participants, or students. These are the beneficiaries of the evaluation. Developers of an evaluation usually have in mind the target participants in evaluation. This, however, is not always made explicit if organizers already know and agree on the person logical characteristics and demographics of would-be participants. When the profile of the intended participants is made explicit then this composes the "intents" or standards. On the other hand, the profile of those who actually come, or are accepted, make up the data on "actualities" dimension of Component A .

Component B is the evaluation in general including implementation and operations. This has several aspects, and the evaluators may just choose a few of these aspects or may even add or choose to define their own aspects for evaluation within the limits of operations and implementation. These aspects are content, teaching and learning, facilities and

materials, administration and support staff, linkages and networking, research, and library. Again, data for both intents and actualities for each of these will be collected, analyzed and interpreted .

Component C includes the effects of the evaluation on the trainees, students or participants. In the classic sense these are the changes in or learning of each of the trainees as a result of the evaluation. Stated evaluation objectives are explicit expressions of intents or standards for this component. Usual questions run along the line of “Me the trainees more competent and have become better persons as a result of the evaluation me ”?

Whatever the questions are, indicators of results are needed, and may include state examination results, employment, length of waiting before employment, promotions and employer’s ratings, changes in attitudes and philosophy, and the like. Perhaps, many are at the construct level, and are perhaps lasting and enduring. Effects may be either intended or unintended. Since unintended effects may also be positive, discrepancies between intents and actualities (some of which may be unintended and are positive) may not always be scored negative. Unintended effects may be positive and are value-added occurrences. Non-realization of intended effects is a discrepancy that is scored negatively .

Component D is social impact of the evaluation through, though not always, the trainees. Obviously it is remote and is “in the future” but is probably significant and lasting. While this may not yet be collected by evaluators of new evaluations, intended impact may be spelled out. It is here where the raison whether of the evaluation is clarified, vis-à-vis the values and beliefs of stakeholder-evaluators. Impact may include economic, political and socio-cultural transformations in the community traceable to the evaluation. Generally, it includes contributions of trainees to social welfare and community betterment. So here, social planning is evident, and that changes in society are not left to chance .

Component D may include data on the vision of the evaluation. In Iran, the presence of a school in the vicinity results on the birth of business and opportunities for work like transportation, groceries, and boarding houses. These are unintended impact and are positive. There are also unintended material outputs like the building of roads, pathways, basketball courts and others, which change the landscape of the vicinity from a lethargic to a dynamic ambience .

*4.2 Solid and Broken Line as Vectors with Meaning*

Lines from one component to the other have meaning. Solid lines suggest direct and straightforward relationship. The solid line from the B component or evaluation to the C or effect component means that effects are the direct results of the evaluation. The spiraling line from effect components to impact means that impact is distant in time and may interact with other factors including socio-political context .

The broken line from the A or trainee component to the C or effect component means that the quality of effects is partly dependent on the quality of the trainees. This is somewhat analogous to the Pygmalion-Galatea effect, the quality of marble affects the quality, as a work of art, of the envisioned statue.

The components ABCD of the Model are sequential. This is parallel to the actual events in an educational or training evaluation. This simple attribute of the Model contributes to its intuitive appeal to the users. This is a positive point especially for Iranian and maybe Orientals .

*4.3 The Dimensions of Evaluation “Intents” and “Actualities”*

In traditional evaluation, descriptions of the evaluator are enough. Some call this assessment as it is limited to descriptions. Even at present there are evaluation reports of training seminars and workshops that perform only at the descriptive level. Data for some these is on training evaluation. Thus, the reporting on the “observations” which are actually descriptive of the evaluation me has been considered important. Actual happenings in an evaluation have value when they are judged against standards or expectations .

The proposed model includes observations and actual happenings and is part of the descriptive dimension which is herein called “actualities”. The advantage of the model is the inclusion of the dimension on “intents”. This addition must not be trivialized for it is here where educators seem to be negligent for some unknown reasons. Subsequent discussions will elaborate on the concept of “intent”, its meaning and how this may be identified, defined, measured (if needed) if not on record, or ferreted out from archives and files, if there are. In Figure 1, the dimension intent is presented by solid lines; while that of actualities by broken lines suggesting its relative vulnerability to the contingencies of situations.

*4.4 An Elaboration on Intents*

Intents are the standards, expectations, ought to be, and in its simplest form, plans. Intent is used in a generic manner in this paper. However, it should not be interpreted as plans in the usual connotation of the term. While intents can also mean purposes or objectives in the context of the model, the term “intents” does not only mean aim or objective. Intents or standards or expectations may be the most fugitive of the evaluative data pursued. Documents stipulating standards are not always available. Those that are available may not be accessible. Expectations and standards are passed on by a

culture of word-of-mouth or "none verbalized agreement". Practices including agreements with standards are not always put in black and white. There is no documentation of standards or expectations arrived at. It is herein when the team of stakeholders could create and agree on real standards and expectations. This will be the "intent" dimension of the model. The exercise of creating standards would also resurrect core values long held by stakeholders. It would also update expectations of the public .

Educational practitioners have not been explicit with standards, i.e., "intents" in education over and above objectives of education. It is only in the report card where the standard is explicit on the cut-off point of a passing grade for example. If there are, over and above the grading system, these maybe found in information flyers, and they are just obliquely alluded to, and are not even labeled as such — intents. The participants will "create" the standards. This is what makes the model challenging and yet visibly open to learning. This is another advantage of this model — the creation by consensus among the stakeholder-participants in evaluation. At the same time nurtures a learning organization. The creation or definition of intents fills in the need for this in education. In education, "standards", which is part of the operational definition of "intents", are seldom set, and if they are set, they are not in black and white, and worse, they are seldom discussed. It seems that people have been accustomed to usual standards like "75% as passing cut-off point." This is seldom challenged, because it is traditionally done over the years. It is in here where stakeholder-evaluators will probably do a lot of "dialoging", questioning, reflection, arid reexamination of beliefs and values .

*4.5The Discrepancy Between the Dimensions of Intents and Actualities*

Exhibit No. 1 shows the interfacing of the geometric shapes. A perfect fit is total interfacing, which means that actualities of the evaluation are totally consistent with the intents of the said evaluation me. This is ideal but can never happen in social• and educational projects. The non-overlap is for the team or organization to work on (Weber, in consultation with Amini, Siawuch through informal conversations at the University of Kassel, Wizenhausen, Germany, 2002). On the other hand, in an extreme case when the geometric figures do not at all overlap and are thus totally separate, then actualities are absolutely different from intents. This is a big problem in the management of a training or educational evaluation me. This could be further illustrated in a case when the deviation of the line representing "actualities" is totally off-line with respect to the line or vector representing "intents".

<Figure 1 about here>

The distance between intents and actualities is a discrepancy between standards or expectations and actual happenings in the evaluation me. The bigger the discrepancy, the bigger is the "problem ."

Problem in this model is operationally defined as any deviation from plans or intents or standards or expectations. Figure 2 shows this. The horizontal line is a vector that moves towards the target, objective, purpose or vision. If the movement deviates from it in actual time and operation, there is a management problem. There is non-conformance of actualities with intents or standards. Without monitoring, this problem could not have been formally known and defined. Its negative effects could not be assessed. It becomes a barrier to the realization of targets and objectives.

If there is no discrepancy between the two dimensions, then intents and actualities are said to be totally consistent since there is absolute interfacing of dimensions. This is impossibility in the real world. However, lessening the discrepancy must be the job of the team, management or organization.

The team of stakeholder-evaluators must, as its primary task, determine the consistency and the discrepancy between the "intents" and "actualities" dimensions. The tasks of the stakeholder-evaluators include the following :

1. Discussions and consensus on what data to gather. The articulation of the intents and expectations would suggest the data to be collected for the actualities in a straightforward manner.

2. Development of data-gathering tool for data on actualities

3. Division of labor among team members

4. Review, critique and team approval of tools and timetable

5. Collection, analyses and interpretation of data

6. Intra-team presentation of report

7. Cleaning the report, submission and presentation to a greater number of stakeholders and the target audiences .

All these activities are characterized by teamwork, exchange of views, sharing, reflection, dialogue, and consensus development .

*4.6 General Frame for the Data Matrix*

The stakeholders as evaluators will decide and agree as a team as to what data is to be gathered, and how they may be gathered. A matrix for data gathering is presented as frame. Sub-matrices anchored on this general frame may be generated as required .

The data to be gathered for evaluation are those on the components of the model. These components are in the rows of the matrix which are A — Beneficiaries or Trainees; B — Evaluation; C — Effects; D — Impact and E; The Component B or Evaluation has Sub-components which include Content, Methods, Lectures, Schedule, and Facilities .

There might be sub categories of Component C — Effect, and Component D — Impact. The nature of these categories would depend on the objectives and goals of the evaluation being evaluated .

Two columns of the Data Matrix correspond to the dimensions of "Intents" and "Actualities". It is in the column of Intent wherein the expectations, standards and plans are articulated. The stakeholder-evaluators will define, discuss, reflect, agree on and decide on the expectations and standards for each of the components found in the rows. For example, there will be expectations/standards for the intended trainees or beneficiaries. What qualities must a prospective trainee possess? What tests must s/he pass prior to training? What prior training must s/he already have to qualify? What are his/her prospective functions? The stakeholder-evaluators will create these standards. They will do the same for the rest of the proposed model components .

In the column Actualities, data on the evaluation gathered through observations, records, ethnography, logbook, and tests and even forecasts/predictions (for the Impact Component) are organized. These data are organized according to the components as categorized in the matrix. For example, the "actualities" in the trainees or beneficiaries of the evaluation will be collected and organized. This will include in a straightforward manner what standards/expectations set in the column Intents. Thus, the list of actual data will include the qualities of the trainees, test scores passed prior to training; earlier training data; and prospective plans or functions in his job .

Similar data or actualities will be gathered and organized for the components on evaluation, effects and impact .

The Column Remarks is where the results of the process of comparison between intent and actualities are organized. Theoretically, the result of the comparison may be positive which means that the actualities are consistent with the intents; it may also be negative which means that there is discrepancy between intents and actualities. That this may be a "problem" depending on the magnitude of the discrepancy and the importance of the team of stakeholder Evaluation facet being evaluated.

Evaluators may confer with the manager to ascertain the ramifications of the problem. Or at least the team must underscore the problem to bring the attention of the manager to it .

*4.7 Managing the Problem*

In this model, a problem is defined as the difference or discrepancy between intents and actualities. Although actualities can never completely interface with intents (informal conversations with Amini, 2002) the evaluation is effective when actualities are in conformance with "intents". As shown in Exhibit No. 2, the horizontal vector or line moves towards the goal. This line is the intent. It is a symbol for standards and expectations which when satisfied will lead towards the realization of the evaluation goal. In the real world, actual implementation of the evaluation may deviate from this line, and this deviation is defined as a problem. It is an operational definition of a problem .

<Figure 2 about here>

The task of management is to minimize this deviation. As illustrated in Exhibit No. 3, the effort of minimizing deviation would lessen the negative repercussions of the deviation. Whatever the case, the following may be done :

1.Define and measure the problem

2.Estimate its cost in terms of the damage it will do to the realization of goals

3. Define alternatives scenarios and paths

4. Choose and decide on a path considering resource efficiency and effectiveness .

In all of these, teamwork is employed. Stakeholder evaluators will agree on the magnitude of the problem given the data at hand and estimate its ramifications/cost/damage/loss. They will assist the evaluation manager in defining alternative scenarios/paths, and in the choice of the best considering contingencies .

<Figure 3 about here>

## 5. Conclusion

In the light of survey and the analysis of the finding of the study, the following conclusion was drawn:

1. Regarding the components of the proposed model, among the fifty (50) student respondents, thirty (30) responded strongly agree and twenty (20) agree. On the other hand among the thirty (30) educational administrators twenty (20) responded strongly agree and ten (10) agree.

2. There are two important constructs or concepts used in the proposed model. These are the constructs on intents and actualities. Intents are the expectations in the evaluation, and may also include standards. Actualities are the data or observations on the evaluation. Data on intents and actualities are compared to determine the effectiveness of the evaluation or how well the evaluation is implemented .

3. The proposed model has five components, ABCDE which are the components on trainees, evaluation operations, effects and impact respectively. Evaluation component may have subcomponents like content, resources, schedule, facilities, etc. It is along each of these components that the dimensions of intents and actualities are identified and compared. Decisions are made thereafter .

4. Deviation of actualities from intents is a problem. The evaluator must bring the attention of the evaluation manager to this problem. The manager must address this problem .

5. The model is simple, straightforward and intuitively appealing. Stakeholders of education, social and training evaluations may participate in the process without being intimidated by technical jargons

6. Principles of organizational learning may be applied in the evaluation exercise wherein stakeholders are involved. This includes teamwork, dialogue, reflection, consensus building, reality creation & testing, questioning, and the like .

This model may be tested on a project where it may be appropriate. A team leader with a record keeper must serve as pivotal point in the evaluation exercise. A strategy may be adopted to enable the team of stakeholders to flesh out and chart their perceived realities about the evaluation .

With stakeholders actively participating in the exercise it may be agreed that an otherwise routine evaluation exercise can contribute to the development of a learning organization.

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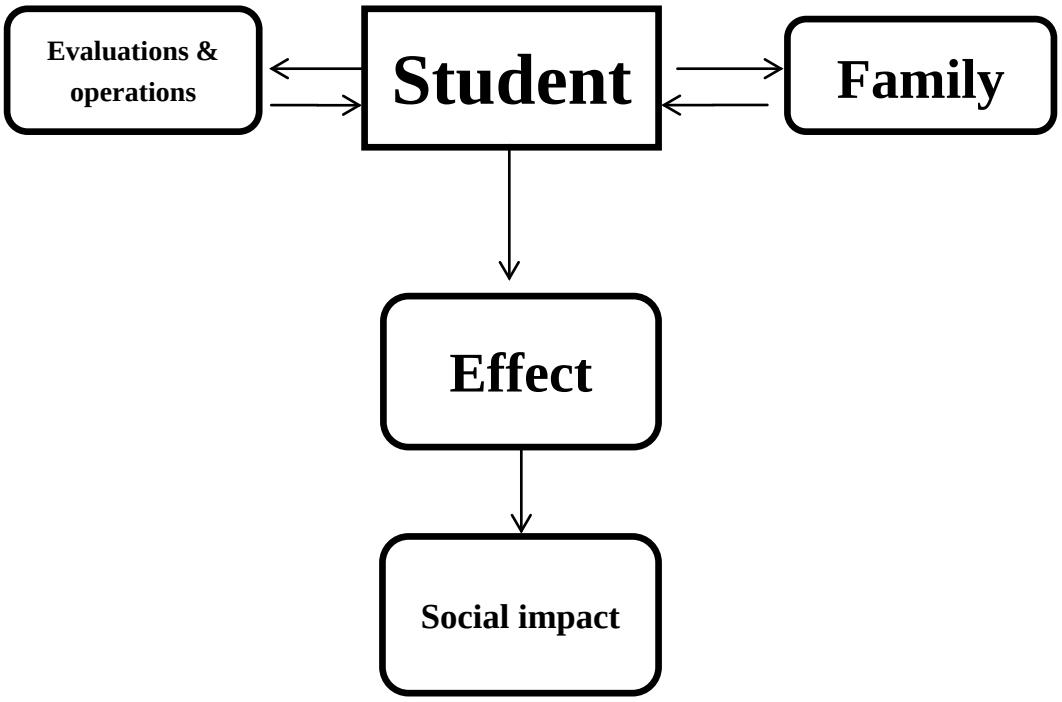


Figure 1. The ABCDE proposed model as a frame work for the development of educational evaluations

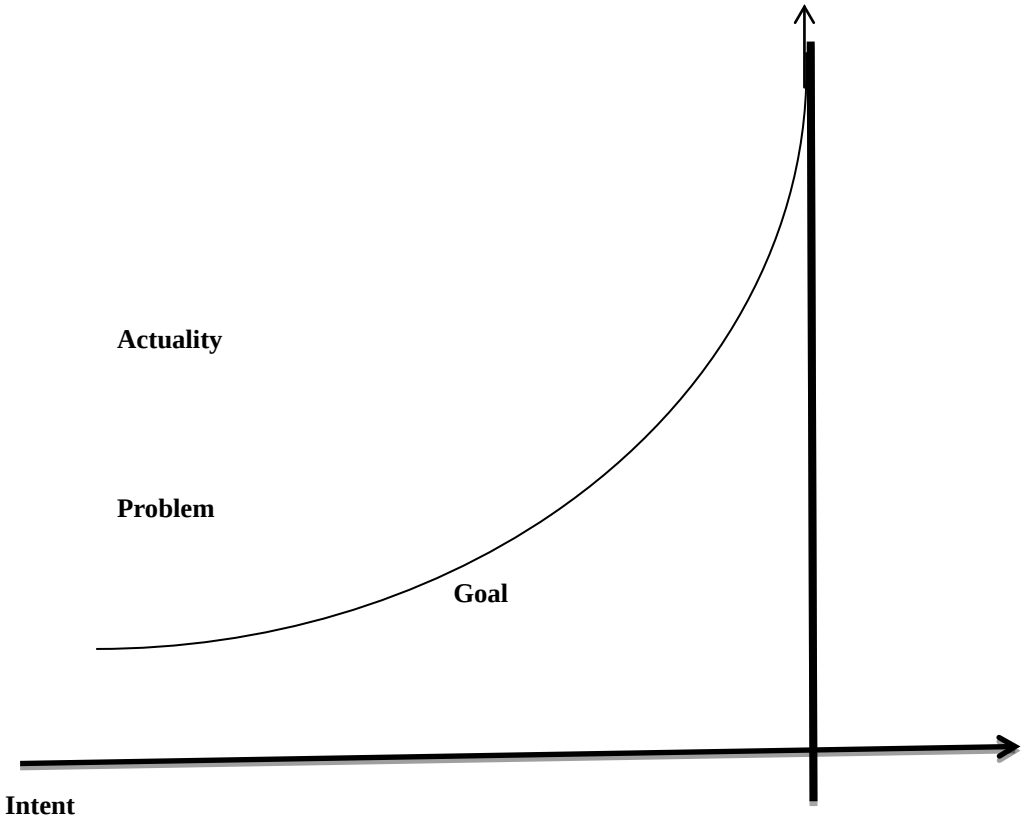


Figure 2

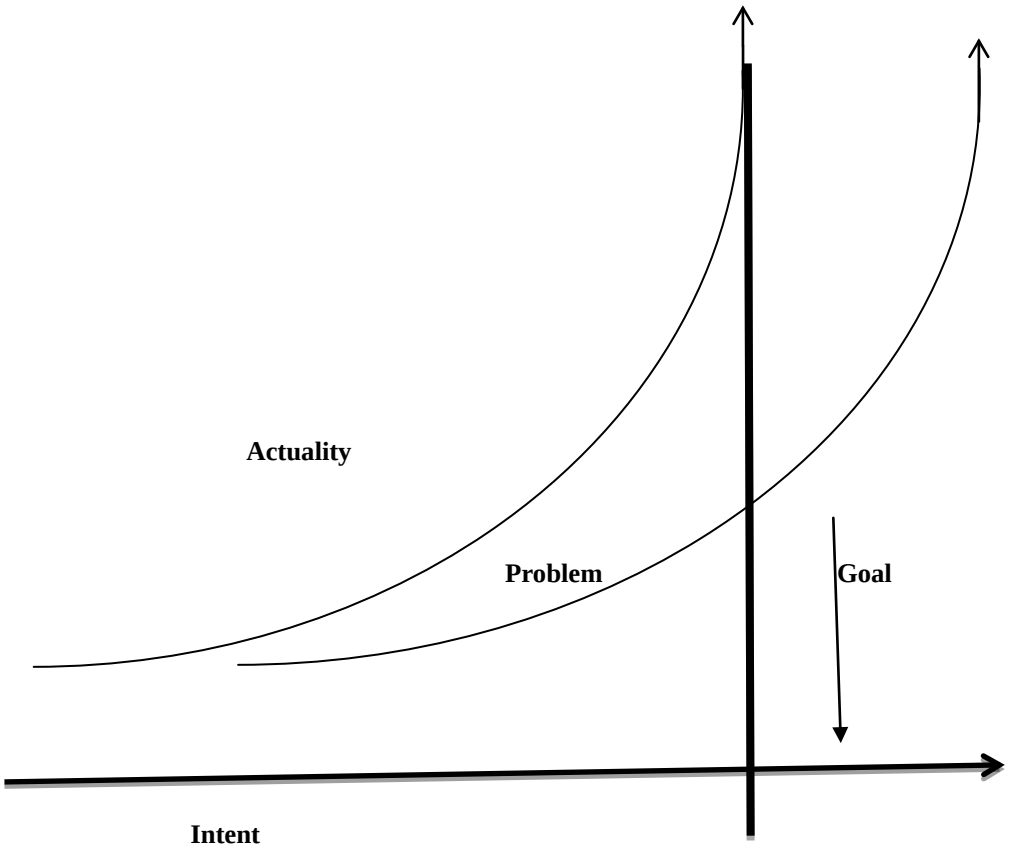


Figure 3


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