



School of Business  
Economics and Law  
GÖTEBORG UNIVERSITY

Handelshögskolans Civilekonomprogram

# *Strategic Evaluation*

*- A study of its purpose in SIDA and SADEV*

*Master/Bachelor Thesis*  
Åsa Kvarnerud 810616  
Anna Maspers 820526

*Tutor:*  
Peter Beusch

**Business Economics**  
Autumn 2007

## ABSTRACT

**Combined Master and Bachelor Thesis in Business Economics, School of Business Economics and Law at Gothenburg University, Management Accounting, Autumn 2007.**

**Authors:** Åsa Kvarnerud and Anna Maspers

**Tutor:** Peter Beusch

**Title:** Strategic Evaluation - A study of its purpose in SIDA and SADEV.

**Background and Problem discussion:** Strategic evaluations are important as they provide crucial information regarding Swedish development assistance and recommendations on how to face problems and inadequacies found in the evaluations. Therefore, the follow up of recommendations is of great significance as well. Unfortunately, SIDA's Management Response system for follow-up of strategic evaluations has not been functioning in a satisfying way and needed actions have not been taken. Thus, Swedish development assistance has been criticised for the lack of implemented actions and the public has started to question the work carried through by the organisations. The concepts of institutionalism, isomorphism and organisational hypocrisy will be investigated to enhance our understanding of the behaviour of organisations. The question at issue is the following:

*What is the purpose of strategic evaluation in the development assistance organisations of SIDA and SADEV?*

**Delimitations:** Instead of investigating all organisations involved, we will specify our enquiry on two organisations that handle strategic evaluation in the development assistance business, SIDA and SADEV. Within SIDA we have included only the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit and the Department of Policy and Methodology. Finally we have decided not to investigate any specific strategic evaluations due to time constraints.

**Methodology:** A hermeneutic approach was chosen as the thesis will be influenced by our interpretation and understanding. Both secondary and primary data have been used. The secondary data consists of relevant literature for the thesis as well as manuals written by the organisations themselves. The primary data consisted of qualitative interviews with seven respondents working in either SIDA or SADEV with strategic evaluation. These data are supposed to be a sufficient (in terms of validity and reliability) and manageable (due to time constraints) interview base.

**Conclusion:** The most prominent purpose of strategic evaluation is to gain and maintain legitimacy from the organisational environment. Institutionalised structures combined with organisational hypocrisy and de-coupling are crucial features to preserve the legitimacy and in assisting the organisations in their quest for further legitimacy and towards a successful survival.

**Further research:** An investigation of the implications of strategic evaluation in the countries which receive development assistance would be of interest as well as a comparison of strategic evaluation internationally. Moreover, an interesting idea for further research would be to examine whether the concept of strategic evaluation exists in the private sector and within profit organisations.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank our friends and family for their support and encouragement in writing the thesis. A special thanks to all our respondents at SIDA and SADEV, who were kind enough to participate in the interviews.

Finally we would like to thank our tutor Peter Beusch for his guidance and advice.

2008-01-12, Gothenburg, Sweden

Åsa Kvarnerud

Anna Maspers

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Background .....	1
1.2. Problem Discussion.....	2
1.3. Delimitations .....	3
1.4. Disposition chart .....	4
2. METHOD OF RESEARCH.....	5
2.1. Hermeneutism or positivism?.....	5
2.2. Data collection.....	6
2.3. Interviews .....	6
2.4. Validity and Reliability .....	8
3. EVALUATION AND INSTITUTIONALISM.....	10
3.1. Evaluation.....	10
3.1.1. <i>Evaluation and learning</i> .....	10
3.1.2. <i>More purposes with evaluation</i> .....	11
3.2. Institutionalism.....	13
3.3. Isomorphism.....	14
3.4. Organisational hypocrisy.....	15
3.5. Problems with institutionalised organisations.....	16
3.6. Theoretical Summary .....	16
4. EMPIRICAL STUDIES .....	17
4.1. Manuals .....	17
4.1.1. <i>SIDA</i> .....	17
4.1.2. <i>SADEV</i> .....	19
4.2. Interview findings .....	20
4.2.1. <i>Tendencies in evaluation</i> .....	20
4.2.2. <i>Evaluation purposes</i> .....	21
4.2.3. <i>Evaluation Topics and Method</i> .....	22
4.2.4. <i>Follow-up</i> .....	23
4.2.5. <i>Matters to Consider in Evaluation</i> .....	24
4.2.6. <i>Evaluation in the future</i> .....	26
4.3. Empirical summary .....	27
5. ANALYSIS .....	28
5.1. Evaluation.....	28
5.1.1. <i>Evaluation and control</i> .....	28
5.1.2. <i>Evaluation and learning</i> .....	29
5.1.3. <i>More purposes with evaluation</i> .....	30
5.2. Institutionalism.....	31
5.3. Isomorphism.....	33
5.4. Organisational hypocrisy.....	33
5.5. Problems with institutionalised organisations.....	35
6. CONCLUSIONS.....	37
6.1. Further research.....	39
7. REFERENCES.....	40
7.1. Literary references.....	40
7.2. Other references .....	42
APPENDIX 1- Questionnaire .....	43

# 1. INTRODUCTION

---

*In this chapter the reasons for choosing this topic will be presented. Furthermore the problem area and question at issue that we intend to investigate will be described, as well as the delimitations we have made. Finally a disposition chart of the thesis structure will be displayed.*

---

## 1.1. Background

*”Bad is bad and good is good and it is the job of evaluation to decide which is which”  
(Vedung, 1998, p.193)*

Evaluation is a tendency that is believed to have begun a long time ago. Some people see the creation as the first proof of the phenomenon as it can be found in the book of Genesis 1:31 with the words “and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good”. Even though the phenomenon of evaluation has existed for a long time it was not until 1930 that the use of the word evaluation first appeared in Sweden in the public sector with Gunnar Myrdal and his decision to evaluate reforms. Only in 1966 could the Swedish word for evaluation be found in the Swedish constitution and then in a sentence concerning the control of production of war material (Vedung, 1998, p.42). In the 1960s a need for evaluation arose as a reaction against earlier trends of radical rationalism in society (which involved preparation and planning for future decisions). The need for evaluation was characterised by empirical analysis and assessments of past politics that had already been introduced and established. Thus, the concept evaluation should not involve planning as this would go against the historical development of the concept. Further, evaluation should be consistent and keep its focus on thorough assessment of occurred actions. Evaluation can also involve past as well as occurring activities (Vedung, 1998, p.22) and one definition of evaluation is as a “careful retrospective assessment of the merit, worth and value of administration, output, and outcome of government interventions, which is intended to play a role in future, practical action situations” (Vedung, 1997, p.3). It must also be considered that must also consider that “evaluation will never provide all the answers” (Weiss, 1998; Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007).

As described earlier, evaluation has for a long time been a topic of discussion and debate. In Sweden this has especially been noticeable within the Swedish public sector where it has gained increased attention. In the public sector evaluation should involve the stages identifying, finding and assessing the administration of public measures and results retrospectively with the purposes of establishing deeper understanding, greater self-reflection and better decisions. Also evaluation looks back as to systemise, follow up and grade occurring or finished public activities and the achieved results thereof. Nevertheless another purpose of evaluation is to look forward. To fulfil this purpose the evaluation has to be taken into practice by politicians and authorities involved in order to correct mistakes, to increase the possibility of success and to lead to a public sector that functions better (Vedung, 1998, pp.19-20).

The public sector involves organisations working with development assistance like the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (hereafter SIDA) and the Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation (hereafter SADEV). SIDA was established in 1952 and is an authority under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Its objective is “to contribute to making it possible for poor people to improve their living conditions” (<http://www.sida.se>).

SIDA's work consists of specifying budgets and deciding on receiving countries for Swedish international development assistance. It is a global organisation with approximately 900 employees (about 200 of them are situated in receiving countries) and the head office is located in Stockholm (<http://www.sida.se>). SIDA (2001, p.2) defines evaluation as "a careful and systematic retrospective assessment of the design, implementation, and results of development activities". Evaluation is an important part of development assistance and SIDA (2007, p.3) especially highlights this by stating that "evaluation actions are meant to strengthen learning and performance among the actors involved in Swedish development co-operation and to provide information to the general public and government bodies about the results of Swedish development co-operation through SIDA". Within SIDA there are two departments of special importance when it comes to evaluation. The Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit is responsible for the creation of comprehensive evaluations that are of strategic importance for Swedish development co-operation. These evaluations have an overall purpose "to enhance results orientation in SIDA's work by providing insights and lessons learned that can be incorporated into the activities of the organisation" (SIDA, 2007, p.3). A more specific term for this kind of evaluation is strategic evaluations and the findings are of significance to the entire SIDA organisation. The position of the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit within SIDA is a semi-autonomous one where "evaluations are to take place openly and systematically" (SIDA, 2006b). The evaluations initiated by this department are executed by external consultants and occur in cooperation with other contributors and donor countries. The second department is the Department of Policy and Methodology which is responsible for the coordination of the policy and methodology within SIDA. Strategic evaluation is also important for them as a tool to enhance policies and methodology in SIDA (<http://www.sida.se>).

Another organisation that handles strategic evaluation is SADEV. SADEV is an independent government institution and was formed in 2006. The purposes of SADEV are to thoroughly follow-up and evaluate development assistance. By looking into Swedish development management their intention and overall goal is to contribute to an increased effectiveness in Swedish development assistance and to an improvement of international development cooperation (<http://www.sadev.se> Bazment/3). As SADEV is an independent organisation, it can freely dispose over its resources and decide upon what issues to evaluate. However, the Swedish government can also give them specific areas to evaluate presupposed that they do not jeopardise the independence of SADEV. Each year SADEV receives a mission statement from the Swedish government. The mission statement consists of descriptions on how SADEV should work in order to contribute to the Swedish goal of development assistance and how the feed-back to the government has to take place (<http://www.sadev.se/Bazment/1>).

## **1.2. Problem Discussion**

Strategic evaluations are significant as they provide essential data about the success of Swedish development assistance as well as recommendations on how to face problems and inadequacies found in the evaluations. In addition, the follow up of the recommendations and advice has a pivotal role. The follow up is conducted by the management of SIDA through a system called the Management Response system (Hanberger and Gisselberg, 2006, p.12). The intention of the system is that the management of SIDA has to respond to the evaluations with conclusions of lessons learned and actions that need to be taken. In other words, the Management Response system should contribute to an improved organisation on SIDA's behalf (SIDA, 2006b). However, a report made by Hanberger and Gisselberg (2006, p.9) came to the conclusion that the Management Response system at SIDA displayed severe

flaws in implementation, follow-up and in its extension knowledge transfer and learning. The writer's point of view was also that the "system appears to be more important than single Management Responses indicating use of the scheme for organisational legitimisation" (Hanberger and Gisselberg, 2006, p.10). However, Swedish development assistance business has not only been criticised in academic studies, it has also occurred frequently in the Swedish press. For example, SIDA was in the centre of attention in November 2007. This time the topic concerned how SIDA was handling corruption (RiR 2007:20). The issue at hand was the fact that this area had already been looked into four years earlier in a report made by the Department for Internal Audit at SIDA and that the recommendations had been the same. Four years later still nothing had been done to implement the recommendations that had been given. As a result, SIDA was exposed to criticism as the public started to question and wonder if this lack of action was a common tendency within the organisation (Aktuellt, 20071122).

This kind of criticism is common in public administration, which often is perceived as bureaucratic and non-efficient. As both SIDA and SADEV are in the public sector, this could imply that there are differences between what is said, decided and done. We believe strategic evaluation can illustrate this type of organisational behaviour since they are used frequently in development assistance. But there could potentially be a gap between what is said and done. The concepts of institutionalism, isomorphism and organisational hypocrisy will be further investigated to improve the understanding of the behaviour within organisations. Our question at issue is as follows:

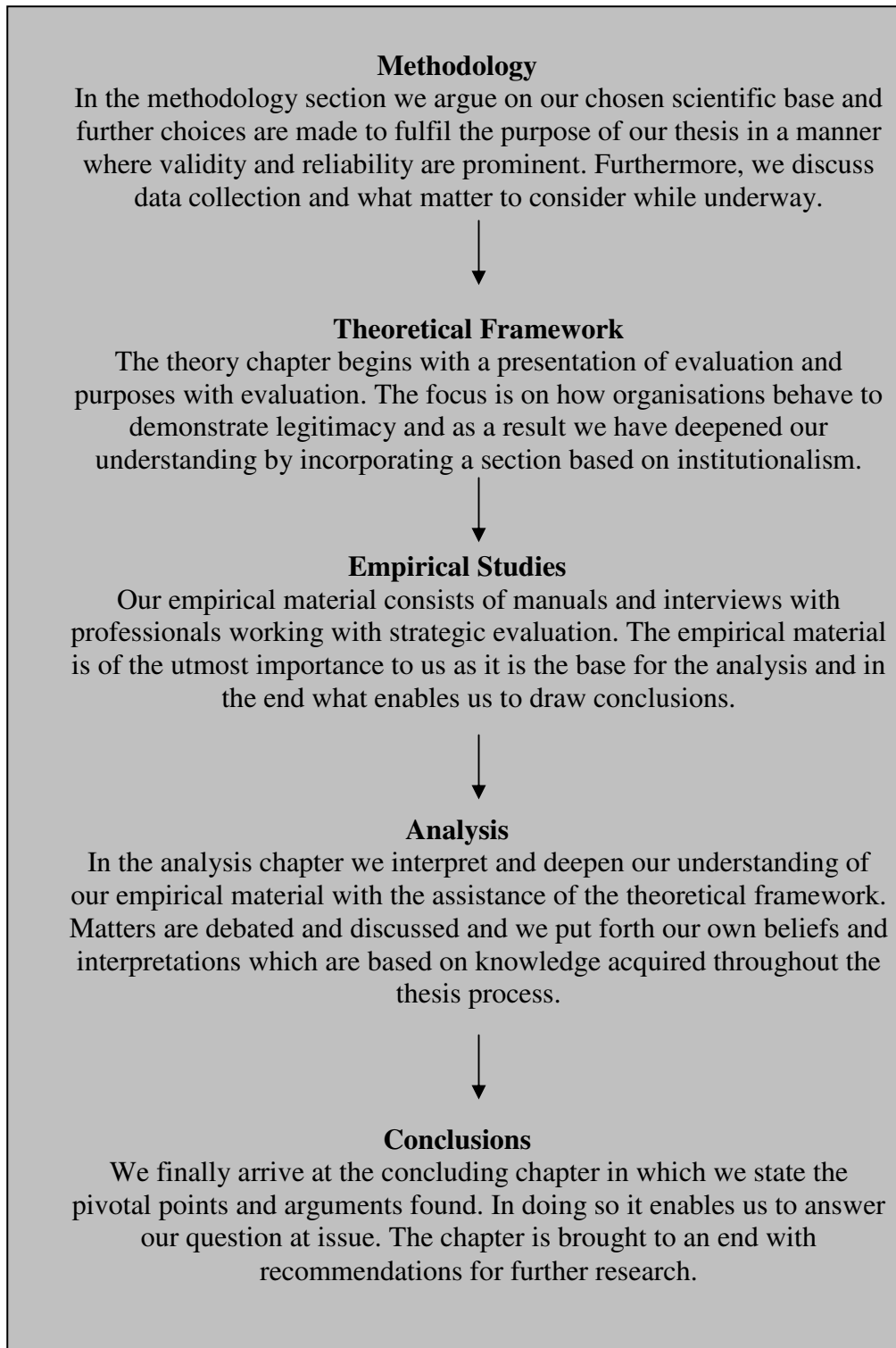
*What is the purpose of strategic evaluation in the development assistance organisations of SIDA and SADEV?*

### **1.3. Delimitations**

Swedish Development assistance and evaluations are two wide subject areas. In order to deepen the understanding of these subjects and to increase the reliability of the findings we have chosen to only investigate two organisations in the development assistance business that handle evaluation instead of investigating all organisations involved. In line with these thoughts we have chosen to perform interviews with more than one individual within each organisation. We have limited ourselves to the organisations of SIDA and SADEV and the area of strategic evaluation. We believe that SIDA and SADEV are appropriate organisations to investigate when it comes to strategic evaluation since SADEV only performs strategic evaluations and SIDA has one department that handles this type of evaluations and another department which uses them on a regular basis. Within SIDA we have therefore narrowed our focus and only included the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit and the Department of Policy and Methodology. The choice of strategic evaluation is made upon an interest in the concept itself as well as in its intention of contributing significant knowledge to the entire organisation.

We have chosen not to investigate any specific strategic evaluations. This choice is due to the fact that many individuals on several organisational levels are involved in the process and it would therefore be too time consuming to locate and interview all of them for this thesis. We believe that to be able to draw conclusions on a specific matter all individuals involved in a specific strategic evaluation have to be interviewed.

## 1.4. Disposition chart





## 2. METHOD OF RESEARCH

---

*Under this heading we will explain the process of conducting our thesis. First we will discuss the implications of our scientific approach, followed by a section of how our data has been collected and why they have been collected in a certain manner. Finally we describe the significance of validity and reliability, which are two concepts of importance to us in the handling of our data.*

---

### 2.1. Hermeneutism or positivism?

When writing a thesis there are two types of approaches to choose from, the hermeneutist and the positivist approach. The hermeneutic approach differs from positivism as it considers it impossible to examine reality in an objective manner. Individuals have different perspectives on reality as each individual has its own interpretation of that reality. This implies that the hermeneutist approach tries to interpret and understand the individual interpretations and from them try to establish an image of the perceived reality that surrounds them (Jacobsen, 2002, p.31). Moreover, the positivist approach is based on other assumptions than the hermeneutist approach and therefore considers it possible for the researcher to separate him-/herself from the phenomenon or the reality that he/she is investigating. The positivist approach also prefers data collected from research results rather than personal opinions. The reason for this is that positivists argue that research results can be combined and create a better overall picture on the phenomenon (Jacobsen, 2002, p.30). The hermeneutist approach on the other hand disagrees and represents the idea that it is difficult to draw conclusions on a general level whereas positivism then means that general conclusion can be drawn if the information base is independent and sufficient (Lundahl and Skärvad, 1992, p.42).

Esaiasson et al (2004, p.245) agree with the thoughts of Jacobsen (2002) and state that hermeneutism is based on understanding and interpretation. The hermeneutic approach can be explained by the use of the hermeneutic spiral in which the empirical material is related to the experiences, interpretations and theoretical perspective of the interpreter as they are established over time (Esaiasson et al, 2004, p.247). Moreover, hermeneutism is connected to the qualitative approach. In this approach selection neither has to be made randomly nor be large enough as to be representative. Instead the interesting feature is how the empirical material is interpreted and understood by the researcher, as each individual's interpretation is unique. The uniqueness derives from a combination of previous knowledge and the ability of interpretation (Gustavsson, 2003, pp.71-73).

We believe that it would be difficult to draw any general conclusions applicable for the development sector or for evaluation in the larger picture. Therefore, we state that the hermeneutic approach is the most appropriate in our case not only because of the problem with generalization but also since this thesis will be influenced by our interpretation and understanding of how the people that we interviewed experience evaluation.

## **2.2. Data collection**

In the beginning of the working process we searched for data that on a wide range was related to foreign aid and international development cooperation in order to get a general idea of the amount of data that already exists regarding our topic, what the data consisted of, if it was interesting from our point of view and also if it were data that we could get hold of (Rienecker and Stray Jørgensen, 2002, p.118). The library with its professional service and knowledge was of assistance to us in locating useful information through key issues and topics for our thesis subject. We used the search engine of the Gothenburg University Library: GUNDA, databases such as Business Source Premier and Emerald as well as Internet search engines, primarily Google Scholar. To be able to locate adequate sources of information we used the key words “development assistance”, “development cooperation”, evaluation, institutionalism, isomorphism and “organisational hypocrisy” as these words would assist us to further explain the development assistance business, evaluation and organisational behaviour. These sources of information are all so called secondary data, that is data that has been collected by others, for example other institutes or researchers (Andersen, 1998, p.150). As a result the secondary data may not have been written with our purpose at focus and may therefore be somewhat problematic to use. We have had this in mind throughout the process and made our selection according to what best fits our purpose. Moreover, we have used secondary data from the organisations themselves in our empirical material, more specifically their manuals. The manuals are used by the organisations as guidelines as well as descriptions of the working process. We have chosen to describe them in the empirical material as they depict the communicated image of their line of work externally. Also they are of interest and relevance to our purpose as they handle the issue of strategic evaluation in its use in theory. But since data provided by organisations themselves can be subjective and/or restricted as to portray the organisations in a preferable way, we have approached the manuals critically.

In our information search we quickly discovered that the data collected on the thesis subject was quite restricted and that primary data would be of specific importance as to deepen our understanding of the thesis subject. The primary data was collected through interviews with individuals involved in the evaluation process of SIDA and SADEV. Primary data is data that a researcher has collected himself (Andersen, 1998, p.150). Primary data can be collected by using either the qualitative or the quantitative method. The quantitative perspective derives from the knowledge that the objective reality can be expressed numerically, also known as positivist epistemology. These kinds of studies therefore highlight measurements, they tend to be of a more experimental kind and they also underline the importance of search for relationship. The qualitative perspective is the knowledge that personal perceptions reflect reality and is also known as the phenomenological view. Hence, these studies highlight the understanding and the meaning of common situations (Glatthorn and Joyner, 2005, p.40), which is of great significance for our thesis. Also, the primary data guided us in further search for even more specific secondary data and also helped us to narrow down the subject of our thesis.

## **2.3. Interviews**

Interviews that are held face to face are an excellent way of collecting and registering data. Having interviews allows the interviewers to ask further questions based on the previous

answers given by the respondents. Furthermore, it allows interaction between the respondents and the interviewers. In our case interviews were a suitable way of collecting data, as we did not have extensive previous knowledge of the topic of our thesis. We performed the interviews to gain information of the daily working habits of the respondents as well as their general knowledge of development assistance and evaluations. Thus, interviews gave us a good perspective of the respondents' own opinions on how the organisations, in which they are employed, function. Our aim was therefore to see the situation from the perspective of the respondents (Esaiaasson et al, 2004, pp.279-282). Except one, all interviews took place in the headquarters of SIDA and SADEV, which are located in Stockholm and Karlstad. The last interview took place in Gothenburg where the respondent in question is located half-time.

When deciding on whom to interview it was important for us to have a sufficient and manageable interview material. Sufficient enough as to increase credibility and validity in the answers given but still manageable due to time restraints of interviewers as well as respondents. When interviewing it is preferable to interview individuals with whom the writers have no previous relationship in order to enhance the reliability of the answers given by the respondents as personal incentives towards one answer over another is reduced. It also is advantageous for the interviewer as the questions can be put forth free from any personal interference that otherwise may hinder the interviewer from asking certain questions of a more dubious kind. All in all these actions assist us in remaining neutral as writers (Esaiaasson et al, 2004, pp.286-287).

We have interviewed seven professionals at SIDA and SADEV, whereof two respondents have experience from both organisations. At SIDA we have interviewed Mats who is currently employed at the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit where he handles strategic evaluation. A second respondent at SIDA is Nils-Olof who has been within the SIDA sphere for ten years and who is currently employed at the Department of Policy and Methodology at SIDA. He is also a member of the SIDA project committee. The project committee handles project requests of 50 million Swedish crowns and above and has the function of being a quality reassurance organ. At SADEV five professionals were interviewed. First we interviewed the current General Director of SADEV, Lennart, who also worked in SIDA at the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit as head of office in the 1970s. At SADEV we interviewed professionals performing the actual evaluations. The first professional was Fredrik who has academic experience in sociology but who also has been working as an evaluation consultant on the operational level. Then we interviewed Inger, an M.Sc graduate and last we met Susanne. She has practical working experience from SIDA's receiving countries and is currently employed at SADEV. We also met Pelle who works fifty percent for SADEV and fifty percent as a professor in economics.

The people that we have interviewed are individuals that we felt would be suitable for questioning and thus provide data needed for a relevant perspective on how these organisations work and the implication of it. This assumption was based on information given in their job descriptions as well as their current (and past) positions within the organisations of SIDA and SADEV. Overall the chosen respondents had extensive knowledge and experience of development assistance and evaluations, in most cases both of professional as well as of personal kind. Therefore we thought they would be able to depict a satisfying view of development assistance and strategic evaluation. The interviewees were contacted by e-mail in which we informed them about the purpose of our thesis. It enabled the respondents to refer to other colleagues that would be suitable for us to interview if they themselves felt inadequate. We also contacted several of the respondents beforehand by

phone to establish a less informal relationship and also to conveniently set a date for the interviews.

The construction of questions is a pivotal part of the thesis process and it is important that the question template is connected to the purpose of the thesis, as the answers obtained contribute to the main data for analysis and conclusions. To construct questions there are different types of questions that can be used. Normally the template begins with questions of personal information, which help to create a good and relaxed interview situation. Then questions of a more thematic character follow, in which the respondent can narrate on important dimensions of the thesis subject. Follow-up questions are connected to the thematic questions and can be asked to receive a reply with richer information. When the thematic questions have been asked the interviewer can ask direct questions about areas that still have not arisen and that are important for the thesis purpose (Esaiaasson et al, 2004, pp.289-290). All questions should be of a dynamic characteristic to keep the conversation going and simultaneously to motivate the respondents to discuss and narrate on their experience and knowledge. The questions should also be short and easy to facilitate their understanding and thus obtain a comfortable atmosphere for interviews. Hence, a well executed interview is the result of short interview questions followed by long answers (Esaiaasson et al, 2004, p.290). We therefore constructed a template for questions with the intention to support a dynamic sphere in which the respondents would feel free to tell us about their knowledge, experience and opinion. The initial interview consisted of a wide range of questions in order to gain general knowledge of the subject of our thesis. Our knowledge of the subject deepened with the collection of more specific empirical material, which enabled us to narrow down the questions. The interviews were recorded to increase the level of credibility in the empirical material as well as to enable us to retrace our steps of action if any data should have been overlooked or misinterpreted. Loss of data is however part of the process as the writers select the data that should be included in the thesis to create an adequate overview of the chosen subject. The data selection process states that the most relevant data for the thesis is collected and hence less relevant data is ignored. (Andersen, 2004, p.183).

Moving on, our respondents are all employed by either SIDA or SADEV, both are Swedish organisations controlled by the government. This has important implications for the behaviour of the organisations and the individuals working within these organisations as it may restrict their actions and/or information. To minimise the tendency for restricted and influenced information given by the respondents we have also chosen to keep the interviewees anonymous to a certain extent by only using their first names, in order to keep focus on the actual answers instead of the person interviewed and also not to impede potential answers. Further, the ethical responsibility has been of importance to us when collecting information from our respondents, since the empirical material is based primarily on personal opinions.

#### ***2.4. Validity and Reliability***

In order to provide a reliable interpretation of what is happening, it is of great importance to achieve a high level of validity. "Validity is in this sense referring to a good congruence between theoretical definitions and operational indicators but also that we are measuring what we say that we are measuring" (Esaiaasson et al, 2004, p.59). Despite the definition given above validity tends to have a relatively wide range of definitions in literature and is therefore divided into two different definitions, which are "the concept of validity" and "the result of validity". A good congruence between the theoretical definition and the operational

indicators as well as absence of systematic mistakes is covered in the term concept of validity. If we are measuring what we say that we are, is covered in the term result of validity and Esaiasson et al (2004, p.61) mean that “a good concept of validity combined with a high level of reliability signifies a good result of validity”. Thus, if we are congruent, exact and accurate as well as measure what we say we measure, we can achieve a high level of validity.

Reliability is a term that states to which extent measured results are affected by coincidents and it wishes to reduce any unreliable factors that may exist (Andersen, 1998, p.85). Therefore absence of systematic mistakes is of essence in order to achieve a high level of reliability. Esaiasson et al (2004, p.67) describe systematic mistakes as mistakes that can occur by accidents and carelessness during the collection of data or when all the data is put together and is something that should be avoided.

Validity and reliability have been very important for us during the whole process of writing our thesis, foremost because of the restricted time we have had to our disposal, which to a certain extent has limited the feasible number of interviews. The concepts of validity and reliability have been of further significance to us as the focus of our thesis involved personal opinions and thoughts about how the theory actually works when it is taken into practice. As a result the data collected from the interviews have been handled with care in order to neither be misinterpreted nor to have negative implications in terms of validity and reliability. Another problem that we have had to face concerned the wide definition of the term evaluation that our thesis is based upon. Esaiasson et al (2004, p.63) argue that “this validity problem increases as the distance between theoretical definitions and operational indicators also increases. Consequently the problem can be seen as less severe when it refers to simple and less complicated theoretical concepts”. As the definition of evaluation can be seen as wide and therefore be interpreted differently among people we started every interview with general questions in order to create an overview on their definition of the term evaluation. Furthermore, in order to increase the level of validity and reliability an alternative could have been to continue or re-examine an issue that already had been looked into. In our case this was not possible as no one had looked into the matter before from the point of view of SIDA and SADEV combined. This we believe is due to the fact that SADEV has only existed for a mere two years.

### **3. EVALUATION AND INSTITUTIONALISM**

---

*Under this heading we present important theoretical concepts that will assist us to analyse our empirical material. The first section discusses evaluation and the purposes of evaluation. Thereafter we describe institutionalism as we argue it will deepen our understanding of the purposes of evaluation. Moreover we present the concepts of isomorphism and organisational hypocrisy and how they affect organisational behaviour. The terms legitimacy and “talk, decision and action” we believe are pivotal in the understanding of evaluation and its purpose. At last we address the problems of efficiency and generalization and a potential solution called de-coupling.*

---

#### **3.1. Evaluation**

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, evaluation can be defined as a “careful retrospective assessment of the merit, worth and value of administration, output, and outcome of government interventions, which is intended to play a role in future, practical action situations” (Vedung, 1997, p.3).

Sahlin-Andersson and Rombach (1995, p.9) express this definition by putting it into less formal words by saying that evaluations are expected to show what has happened in the past and assist in the establishment of guidelines for the future. Evaluation gives direct attention to certain areas at the expense of others. The areas in focus consist of issues which are seen as more desirable and important for evaluation. Certain issues that are considered as problematic are therefore not prioritised and more or less ignored. (Sahlin-Andersson and Rombach, 1995, p.11). Sahlin-Andersson and Rombach (1995, pp.12-13) continue by stating that evaluation consists of a relationship based on power as the evaluator can exercise control over what is evaluated. Acceptance from the people who have taken part in the actions that are being evaluated is a basic condition that has to be fulfilled. Acceptance is of crucial importance in order to make the evaluation successful as well as to ease the process regarding guidelines, evaluation method and create a dialog between the two parties. If the criteria of acceptance is unfulfilled it can easily result in a situation of distrust, which is the greatest difficulty concerning evaluation. As acceptance of the evaluation is part of the concept it is important that evaluations are objective and seen from an external perspective. Evaluations of both positive and negative aspects of an event or process are necessary to make the most out of what evaluation can offer. Despite the difficulty concerning distrust, evaluations paradoxically require trust, as the people who have taken part in the actions that are being evaluated despite their feelings have to put their trust in the evaluators. (Sahlin-Andersson and Rombach, 1995, pp.12-13).

##### **3.1.1. Evaluation and learning**

Vedung and Sahlin-Andersson and Rombach are only a few of the people who share the opinion that evaluation not only concerns the past but that it can be used to establish future guidelines as well, if used correctly. To be able to do so it is important to see how an organisation can learn from evaluation of previous actions.

Nils Brunsson (1995, p.53) has written an article about evaluation and learning. He means that organisations and decision-makers within organisations should learn from their mistakes

and that evaluation therefore has an important role to play. In order for organisations to learn there are certain criteria that have to be fulfilled. It is of crucial importance that information concerning decided actions, their implementation and effects are accessible. Despite this there is a tendency for decision-makers to have limited access to information as a result of actions taken by other individuals within the organisation and thus creates an obstacle for learning. Another problem can be that the information is subjective as individuals may wish to influence the decision-makers' opinions in a certain direction. A third problem is that the information can be irrelevant or considered to be so by the decision-makers. The irrelevancy can arise as a result of previous experiences in the topic or due to a situational change (Brunsson, 1995, pp.57-58).

Brunsson (1995, p.66) continues to discuss problems with organisational learning by using principle as the key word. In order to learn from its mistakes an organisation has not only to change its actions or results but also its principles that the decisions are made upon. Brunsson's opinion is that as long as an organisation uses the wrong principles it cannot learn from the action taken. However, Brunsson (1995, p.67) adds that evaluation on the other hand can be a hinder in organisational learning if the organisation has limited access to adequate and objective information. If this is the case the relevance of evaluations in the eyes of the decision-makers cannot be guaranteed. Limited access to adequate and objective information is a common tendency in many organisations, which often results in rejection of evaluations. Nevertheless evaluations can be altered to become relevant with respect to actions and purpose. Then evaluation may be used by decision-makers to display good results instead of failures. Further on, evaluation can be performed separate from the main business processes. This is often the case when evaluations are carried out by external specialists and here evaluation is foremost a ritual (Brunsson, 1995, p.68).

### ***3.1.2. More purposes with evaluation***

Evert Vedung (1995, p.25) discusses the purpose of evaluation by stating that it is problematic if "no one takes interest in the reports and that the reports merely are put on a shelf to collect dust". He continues by adding that crucial decisions concerning the future existence of the organisations are often taken before the evaluation process is over and that the information given in evaluations therefore can be seen as useless. Another critique towards evaluations is the role of evaluation as a political weapon that can strengthen one's position or undermine that of one's opponent (Vedung, 1995, p.26).

Despite Vedung's criticism he still believes that evaluation can be useful. He thinks that a first purpose can be of an instrumental kind where its main function is to find the most efficient approach (through experiments) in order to reach goals set by politicians. Efficiency is measured in monetary funds and the mean that reaches the goals to the lowest cost is considered as the most efficient. Instrumental use of evaluations implies that the evaluations are neutral and it also disables the possibility of problem finding in evaluation (Sahlin-Andersson and Rombach, 1995, p.31). However, Vedung (1995, p.36) argues that the instrumental purpose of evaluation is relatively low due to the fact that reality is not objective and also because the empirical evidence has to be gathered randomly and from experiments. From previous evaluation experiences he has come to the understanding that actual use of evaluation is in sharp contrast to random experimenting. This is the case since topics are chosen carefully and also because reality is filled with subjective opinions and norms.

The second possible purpose of evaluation described by Vedung (1995, p.38) is the informative one. The informative purpose implies that evaluations are used primarily as a mean for politicians and other stakeholders to gain empirical and/or theoretical information on a topic. He also believes that this type of information is seldom put into action and that the information given in the evaluation therefore only is used as a way for the stakeholders to deepen their understanding in the evaluated matter. This can for example result in a deeper understanding concerning who it affects and also what the effects are. When the evaluation process has come to an end the decision-makers also tend to not follow the recommendations and advice given in the evaluation. Vedung (1995, p.38) refers to this as evidence that strengthens his opinion that this kind of evaluations merely function as a source for information and understanding.

Vedung states that the third purpose is the legitimating use of evaluation. The purpose developed as a solution to politics and social conflict, as politics is a power struggle where opinions differ. Vedung (1995, p.41) thinks of the state as an actor with many counteracting wills as it consists of a mix of different individuals and political parties. Politicians need evaluations to justify decisions and not as a way to fill the need for knowledge (if it exists). The legitimating purpose of evaluation therefore has the function of a source of power that can help to strengthen one's own opinions and counteract those of the opposition. The important aspect of evaluation with regards to legitimacy is the use of evaluation results as a legitimating factor. Elisabeth Sundin (1995, p.150) also discusses the connection between evaluation and legitimacy. She argues that it is crucial for organisations to obtain legitimacy as a legitimate issue is seen as valid and goes as far as "if you loose legitimacy, you have lost everything" (Boulding, 1978: Karlsson 1991 and Sundin, 1995, p.150). Evaluation is to be used to persuade the environment, in which the organisation exists, that certain opinions and/or decisions taken are correct. Further, evaluation can be used interactively, meaning that evaluation is based on giving as well as receiving information and that evaluation findings are part of an extensive source of inside information used for decision-making (Vedung, 1995, pp.43-44).

Another purpose according to Vedung (1995, p.44) is the tactical purpose of evaluations. One example of this can be an evaluation that takes place to display that something important is in process, in other words it is used to put up a façade. The focus of tactical evaluation is on the initiation and the process of evaluating and not on the actual results (as it is with the legitimating purpose mentioned above).

The final purpose of evaluation that Vedung mentions is the ritual one. Evaluations are merely executed as an empty, repetitive measure based on the idea that it is an action that is supposed to be carried through. This idea stems from current norms and thoughts and thus has a mere symbolic value through the behaviour it emanates. Rituals are often connected to myths, which in this context are interpreted as a phenomenon that can "help to explain existence and give meaning" (Vedung, 1995, p.46). Hence, evaluation is a ritual activity that demonstrates existence. Annika Rabo (1995, p.185) writes that evaluation within for example development assistance functions as a proof of existence by stating that "what evaluation rituals do, is that they display - through written documents- that projects and programs do actually exist". Vedung (1995, pp.46-47) concludes his article by stating that evaluation can be used in all the purposes mentioned and it can even be used simultaneously. He also mentions that use of evaluation differs depending on if its focus is on the process of evaluation or the results of the evaluation. This focus can also change over time and as a result also change the purpose from one purpose to another.



As to more thoroughly help us explain the legitimating, tactical and ritual purposes of evaluation we will as a continuation use institutionalism as a mean for deeper understanding of these uses and more explicitly the concepts of isomorphism, organisational hypocrisy and de-coupling. We have chosen to further investigate these purposes, as we believe they are of special importance for our thesis purpose. We believe they can assist us to better understand organisational behaviour and how organisations are connected to myths, rituals and legitimacy. We also think it can assist us as to understand the importance of being legitimate for an organisation and what role norms and pressures (external and internal) have in this context.

### **3.2. Institutionalism**

In the book *“Institutional Theory in Political Science: The “New Institutionalism“* Guy Peters (2005, pp.18-19) states four conditions that help define the concept of institutionalism. Primarily he argues that institutions always are a structural part of society and moves on by adding that this most surely is the overall defining aspect. The mentioned structure can take a formal (legal frameworks) or informal form (various networks with mutual norms and opinions). This condition helps the organisations and their individuals to organise in groups with common interests and helps to establish a certain amount of predictable behaviour. The second aspect is that institutions have to be stable over a longer period of time in order to be reconciled as institutionalised. This could take on various forms and one example could be a regular coffee break at 9.15 AM, an established informal structure. As to be classified as institutionalism, the behaviour also has to have an impact on individual behaviour, preference and opinions. This implies that the established institutional structure has to be of importance for the individuals affected and that they assign it legitimacy and relevance. In doing so the institutional structure also functions as a strain on the individuals. Finally the institutional structure has to be upheld on a basis of shared values and significance among the individuals concerned (Peters, 2005, pp.18-19).

New institutionalism can be said to have begun in 1977 with the article *“Institutionalized organisations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony”* written by John Meyer and Brian Rowan. This article represented a new way of thinking in the study field of institutionalism and their ideas has spurred science ever since. Their article discusses the emergence of formal structure in organisations as a process of institutionalisation where the formal structure is reinforced by ceremonial behaviour and thereof helps to establish a state of legitimacy for the organisation in its environmental context. Meyer and Rowan (1977) state two situations in which formal organisational structures can be established. The first situation is that of complex networks of technical relations and boundary-spanning exchanges where the formal structures are embedded in various systems of controlled and well coordinated activities. The second situation where formal structures occur is in areas with a high degree of institutionalisation. Here policies and programs are created on a continuous basis with regards to the argumentation of rationality. These formal structures become the norm in this context and forces existing organisations to adaptation and at the same time permits the creation of new organisations that can incorporate the formal structures. The formal structures in their turn have grown out of perceptions of how rationalized organisations are to function and have with time become institutionalised in society. The reason for this organisational behaviour is that it increases the legitimacy of the organisation and thus

increases the chance for survival, irrespective of whether the employed projects and programs actually contribute to increased efficiency or not (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

When discussing formal structures one must understand that it is not the same as the day-to-day work activities in an organisation. Meyer and Rowan (1977) describe formal structure as “a blueprint for activities which includes, first of all, the table of organisation: a listing of offices, departments, positions, and programs...linked by explicit goals and policies that make up a rational theory of how, and to what end, activities are to be fitted together”. Previous research argued that coordination and control of activity were the key factors for a successful formal organisation but Meyer and Rowan disagreed. Instead of agreeing with earlier organisational theory that coordination was routine, that procedures and activities were in compliance with the formal structure they instead put forth that formal organisations often are loosely coupled. What they meant was that the structural elements not only are loosely linked to both each other but also to the actual activities performed by the organisation. The results are to mention a few, rule breaking, decisions not implemented or with dubious consequences, efficiency problems and vague systems for evaluation and follow up (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

The impact of institutionalised structures on an organisation greatly depends on what type of organisation it is. Meyer and Rowan (1977) establish two types of organisations where the first type is an organisation with a clearly defined approach to creating output and also to what the output consists of. In this type of organisation efficiency is the factor for determining success. The second organisation type is one where the output is difficult to determine and measure. Some examples are schools, R&D departments and government authorities. In these cases efficiency is not an appropriate base for determining success. Instead these organisations rely on the institutionalised rules which in its turn can generate trust with regards to the output and thus save the organisation from failure.

### **3.3. Isomorphism**

Isomorphism is characteristic for the new institutionalism and can be described as “a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions (Hawley, 1968; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Meyer and Rowan (1977) introduce the concept of isomorphism in their article meaning that the environment surrounding an organisation has a great impact on it and that the organisation strives to fulfil the institutional myths of the environment. By myths they mean the various established behaviours that exist and people follow as a consequence of informal and formal structures. This behaviour has several implications for the organisation, the first one being that the behaviour allows the organisation to incorporate externally legitimated factors (as a contrast to efficient factors). Second since evaluation of these factors has been executed externally and they hold a certain legitimating value. Finally, the external interference functions as a stabilizer and thus reduces turbulence. When an organisation decides to use formal structures that have been legitimated by an external party it affects the organisation internally as well as its external bonds due to a growing interest for the organisation. Further, using evaluation criteria which have been established externally enables the organisation to move toward a legitimated position in society. Due to these elements institutional isomorphism can help organisation to achieve success and thus survive in the long run (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

Within isomorphism one can distinguish two types: competitive and institutional isomorphism. Competitive isomorphism is based on the idea of a market where free and open competition exists (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). This is not applicable in our case since our thesis subject deals with non-profit organisations in the public sector. We are instead interested in the type called institutional isomorphism. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) discuss how changes due to institutional isomorphism can take place. Institutional isomorphism has its base in political influence and the legitimacy issues. It emerges when organisations experience informal or formal pressure from other organisations (organisations they are dependent upon) or as a result of cultural expectations and often has a major ceremonial aspect. When discussing institutional isomorphism one should question whether its existence can continue as there is no proof of its actual contribution to increased internal efficiency within the organisations. Hence, there are no results to imply that organisations with isomorphic behaviour will function more efficiently than non-isomorphic organisations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

### **3.4. Organisational hypocrisy**

In 1989 Nils Brunsson published "*The organisation of hypocrisy: talk, decision and actions in organisation*". In his book Brunsson (1989, p.27) discusses a phenomenon that he calls organisational hypocrisy, with which he means that certain behavioural aspects of organisations exist only for putting up a facade externally that signals what the organisation desires to signal to its surroundings. Further, Brunsson (2002, p.xiii) talks about three concepts, those being *talk*, *decision* and *action*. He means that there is a large difference between what is said, decided and actually done within an organisation and that these three issues do not correspond on a regular basis. Instead Brunsson (1989, p.102) states that the last part, that of *action*, often is left undone and thus that decisions are unimplemented. Fernandes-Revuelta Perez and Robson (1999) write that "taking a good decision is easy; the difficult part is to achieve what the decision aims at". Brunsson (2002, p.xiv) continues by stating that hypocrisy enables talk, decision and actions to relate to each other but in a non-traditional type of way. Traditionally the relationship has been that talk and decision on a specific matter has been followed by action, which makes implementation of the content of the talk and decision probable. Brunsson (2007, pp.115-116) instead argues that the relationship is the reverse and that while talk and decision state one direction it enables action to move in the opposite direction and thus creates a state of organisational hypocrisy. He adds that this behaviour does not have to be a problem but that it actually can be a solution in a situation with inconsistent demands and conflicting interests. This perception of the relationship of talk, decision and action contradicts the idea of decoupling put forth by Meyer and Rowan (1977) as it signifies that the three organisational tools of talk, decision and action are "coupled rather than decoupled or loosely coupled, but they are coupled in a way other than usually assumed" (Brunsson, 2007, p.116).

Furthermore, Brunsson (1989, pp.8-9) also states that organisational hypocrisy can be expressed through the fact that organisations tend to use existing solutions instead of searching for new and improved ones. He believes this behaviour is based on a view that in a time in which resources and time are scarce and in which the environment is turbulent a belief in organisations of the importance of prompt, arbitrary decision-making as a mean for keeping a façade has emerged. Also the organisational hypocrisy is clearly displayed in situations in which the connection between past, present and future is diffuse (Brunsson, 1989, p.28).

### **3.5. Problems with institutionalised organisations**

Organisations under great influence of institutionalised rules tend to have two problems. Efficiency is the first problematic issue for institutionalised organisations as it is often difficult to combine daily activities and demands with the ceremonial aspects in the organisation. Another area of conflict is due to the high generalization levels that institutionalism implies. An institutional ceremony tends to be standardised and cannot be applied to specific situations. This may create a problematic working sphere (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

The concept of decoupling is put forth by Meyer and Rowan (1977) as a potential solution. It signifies the separation of structural elements from the daily activities as a mean to maintain organisational legitimacy. The institutional organisations minimise measures meant to evaluate performance of the daily activities as to protect their formal structures. Decoupling is a very advantageous approach for institutional organisations as it minimises conflicts due to a lack of integration and since support for the formal structures can be found externally and thus has a legitimating effect. Therefore the formal structures can continue to be standardized while the activities rendered from them can vary in practical response. The behaviour of decoupling is closely linked to good faith, as it is just the good faith of the personnel and the external parties that enables the behaviour at hand (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). In order to maintain the image, technical inspections and evaluations are minimised as they can discover situations and issues that can damage the legitimacy of the organisation. Evaluation actually produces illegitimacy in this context and thus is highly undesired. Further they are viewed upon as means of control as to gain assurance in society that stands in contrast with the idea of good faith and in its extension evaluations actually undermine the ceremonial aspects of institutional organisations (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

### **3.6. Theoretical Summary**

In the theoretical framework above we have discussed several important matters and concepts that will assist us to analyse our empirical material. To conclude the focal points of the theory section we begin with evaluation and why evaluations are executed. There are several purposes for evaluation and the most salient are to use evaluations as to gain legitimacy, as a ritual, tactically or as a mean for learning. In order to better understand the legitimating, ritual and tactical purposes we turned our focus towards new institutionalism with its beginning in Meyer and Rowan (1977). Meyer and Rowan (1977) discuss formal structures and institutionalised behaviours. We continued to describe isomorphism and its effects on organisational behaviour in terms of legitimacy. Moreover we pointed out how hypocrisy can exist in organisations and what implications it has when it comes to talk, decision and action. Finally we highlighted problems with institutionalised organisations in terms of efficiency and generalisation where the concept of decoupling was presented as a potential solution.

## 4. EMPIRICAL STUDIES

---

*To begin this chapter we present the manuals that both restrain and help focus development cooperation and evaluation at SIDA and SADEV. The manuals tell us of evaluation principles and of the evaluation working process. Second we present the results from our interviews with professionals working with strategic evaluation within SIDA and SADEV. We describe different aspects of strategic evaluation from the point of view of the respondents who have extensive knowledge and experience in the subject area. The choice to include manuals and interviews as empirical material we argue is significant as it allows us to compare what they say they do and what they actually do, something we will develop further in the analysis. We also wish to clarify that the word evaluation from here on is the equivalent to strategic evaluation and that the reader pays attention to this accordingly.*

---

### 4.1. Manuals

#### 4.1.1. SIDA

SIDA has several manuals and policies and we will describe three of them, which have special significance for evaluation at SIDA. The manuals are SIDA at Work, Looking Back-Moving Forward and the Policy for Evaluation Activities at SIDA.

##### 4.1.1.1. SIDA at Work

The overall manual of SIDA is “*SIDA at Work*” from 2005. It consists of two parts called “*SIDA at Work – A Guide to Principles, Procedures and Working Methods*” and “*SIDA at Work – A Manual on Contribution Management*”, where the former is on a theoretical level and the latter on a more concrete level with described actions and situations. It focuses on the main principles of SIDA and gives a description on how they govern the distribution of development assistance and future evaluations. The first principle is that of relevance which questions whether a specific project is the solution to a certain problem. The second principle is effectiveness and efficiency, where effectiveness is the ability to reach the overall goals and efficiency deals with rationalising the working methods. The third is feasibility, which asks the question if the prerequisites for implementation exist. Fourth is sustainability, that is, will the activity be able to continue after the development assistance is over? The fifth principle is consultation and coordination in which it is important to establish what SIDA does and what others do. It is also important to know why SIDA is doing what it is doing. Moreover, it is also crucial to look into whether the leadership of a development measure is owned by the cooperation country. The sixth and last principle deals with risk management which refers to the risks are SIDA exposed to and presented risk strategies (SIDA, 2005a, pp.58-59).

The connection between evaluation and the principles is that the principles direct what the evaluation is to look into and three principles are especially connected to evaluation and the purpose of long-term learning and these are relevance, effectiveness and sustainability (SIDA, 2005b, p.45). In the general guidelines it is stated that lessons learned should not be forgotten and that evaluations and reports are to be used in an adequate way as to create an organisation based on knowledge and continuous learning, as the ability to learn from mistakes should be the core of the organisation (SIDA, 2005b, p.10). The manual continues

to discuss quality reassurance within Swedish development cooperation, that is to “ensure that the right things are being done and being done well” (SIDA, 2005a, p.70). Here evaluations play a crucial part together with internal audit and the management response system SIDA utilizes. Evaluation is portrayed as an in-depth analysis that is used for the strategic purposes of learning and accountability (SIDA, 2005a, p.75).

#### **4.1.1.2. Looking back – Moving Forward**

“*Looking back- Moving forward*” (Molund and Schill, 2007) is the manual used by the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit in their line of work and is more context-specific for strategic evaluation than the general “*SIDA at Work*”. The manual is divided into two sections where the first discusses concepts and issues and the second describes the evaluation process step by step. The concept evaluation is defined as “a careful and systematic retrospective assessment of the design, implementation, and results of development activities” (SIDA, 2007, p.2) and the manual tells us that there are two general types of evaluation. The manual discusses external and internal evaluation, where SADEV conducts external evaluations and the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit are somewhere in between internal and external due to their semi-autonomous position (Molund and Schill, 2007, p.18). The second section deals with the evaluation process, which is divided into five steps. In the first step initial consideration is to be made which involves locating stakeholders that have interest in the evaluation, to state the purpose of the evaluation and to “create an organisation for evaluation management” (Molund and Schill, 2007, p.59). The second step is the preparatory issues, which begin with a review of the evaluation as to ascertain what the evaluation objective is. Then the evaluation manager has to state what questions the evaluation is intended to answer and also to decide if the evaluation is feasible, that is that the questions can be answered. The evaluation manager also has to make budget estimations for the evaluation. Finally the terms of reference for external evaluators are established and the external team is found (Molund and Schill, 2007, p.67). The third step in the evaluation process is called the research phase and the key words here are supervision, assistance and communication between the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit and the evaluators (Molund and Schill, 2007, p.81). The fourth step is the reporting and dissemination of the evaluation. The initial report from the external evaluator is investigated and commented upon by the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit and other stakeholders before a final report is put forth. Then the evaluation findings are to be dispersed to interested parties and published by SIDA (Molund and Schill, 2007, p.85). The last step in the evaluation process is that of Management Response. The evaluation manager is to ascertain that the evaluation results are submitted for Management Response (Molund and Schill, 2007, p.93).

#### **4.1.1.3. The Policy for Evaluation Activities at SIDA**

Another document that the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit uses is called the “*Policy for Evaluation Activities at SIDA*”. The policy states that evaluation at SIDA has two purposes: learning and control. With regards to learning evaluation is to contribute by “displaying experiences of ongoing and finished activities” and thus help improve development cooperation at large by increased relevance and efficiency (SIDA, 2001, p.1). The purpose of learning is directed towards the main stakeholders, which are the management and personnel of SIDA as well as other concerned parties. The stakeholders focus on the results of the evaluations. The control purpose is a mean for documentation of results and usage of Swedish development assistance. It can also be used as to hold

development organisations accountable for the implementation of tasks. Here the stakeholders are the general public in Sweden, the Parliament and the board of SIDA (SIDA, 2001, p.1). Local authorities in recipient countries may also benefit from the control purpose of evaluations as they wish to receive information of development measures in their country. Thus, there are two purposes of evaluation according to SIDA and evaluations are often supposed to satisfy them both (SIDA, 2001, p.1).

When choosing strategic evaluation topics the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit has three main criteria to take into consideration as well as three additional criteria. The main criteria are policy relevance, economic scope and innovative value and repetitiveness. These criteria signify that evaluation is to be relevant for development assistance, that the significance of an evaluation can be indicated by its economic scope and that an evaluation is to contribute to new and/or deepened knowledge. The additional criteria are evaluation feasibility, usability and cost-benefit. Feasibility means that it will be possible to do the evaluation. Further, the evaluation is to be of use for SIDA and its partners and the cost is not to surmount the benefit when evaluating (SIDA, 2001, pp.4-5).

The process of evaluation begins with a document called SIDA's Evaluation Plan where the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit states their planned evaluations for the coming year (SIDA, 2007). The evaluation plan is then presented to the board of SIDA, which approve or reject proposed evaluation topics. At the end of each year the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit presents an Annual Report of SIDA Evaluation Activities (SIDA, 2006a), which is a follow up of the evaluation plan. When an evaluation is finished it is of importance that the result is dispersed. The normal procedure is to publish a report where evaluation findings and recommendations are put forth. Other channels are conferences, advisory functions and databases. As to ascertain that the recommendations are considered by the concerned stakeholders (foremost the board of SIDA) a formal action plan is to be established. The action plan is to depict measures needed in order to solve potential problems that the evaluation has identified and a time plan for implementation is needed as well. The responsibility for follow up and implementation of action plans for a specific evaluation lies with the concerned department manager. Furthermore, the chief controller has a duty to inform the General Director every six month on implemented action plans and their follow up (SIDA, 2001, pp.5-6).

#### **4.1.2. SADEV**

SADEV has only existed since the 1st of January 2006 and therefore has not had the time to create as many manuals as SIDA. However, they do have a "*Project Handbook*" of nine sides with guidelines for evaluation within SADEV as of November 2007. In this document it is stated that all evaluations at SADEV take the definition of project and that "the purpose of the project handbook is to ascertain that all projects within SADEV follow necessary administrative routines and that they are managed in a way that is unanimous, structured and quality proofed" (SADEV, 2007, p.2). It continues by stating that the project handbook only is a manual for how projects are to be implemented and not a manual on how to choose which projects to evaluate. Instead that is to be based on criteria in their business strategy, a strategy that is still under production.

In the manual one can also find a description of the work process and three phases are distinguished: the idea and planning phase, the implementation and analysis phase and finally the finalisation and dispersion phase. In the first phase the evaluation topic is investigated and

scrutinised to see whether it is feasible and relevant. A plan on how the implementation is to proceed and required resources is put forth. In the second phase the evaluation is executed, an analysis is done and recommendations are presented. In this phase it is important to adapt the information in the report to the target group to ensure relevance. Finally the evaluation is at its project ending and here the dispersion of the findings and recommendations begin and a plan for how to achieve this is established. The purpose of the dispersion plan is to make sure that the results of SADEV's evaluations is usable for the target group. The responsibility for the project and the completion of the various activities is that of the project leader. Thus, he/she has to "make sure that a dispersion plan is implemented and bear responsibility for the implementation and evaluation of planned dispersion activities" (SADEV, 2007, p.9).

## **4.2. Interview findings**

### **4.2.1. Tendencies in evaluation**

In evaluation the trend is that evaluation has been altered towards as an element of control and not only as a means for learning. This trend has grown as the amount of monetary funds spent on development assistance has increased. From originally being a method for understanding results of actions, Lennart at SADEV is of the opinion is that evaluation today is seen as a method of explaining how well a donor nation is at giving development assistance. This he believes is true due to higher expectations from the public in the current society. Since the degree of success when it comes to giving development assistance is important it can be interpreted that development assistance and evaluations are directed as to fit the preferences of the financiers and not towards learning in the receiving countries which ought to be the basis of the development assistance process. As a result of the shift in the characteristics of evaluation, the organisation SADEV has been established with an investigative purpose greater than that of SIDA and the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit.

Moving on to present time development assistance has experienced some turbulence. In October this year development assistance in Sweden became the spotlight of the national media attention as the Swedish National Audit Office (SNAO) reported fifteen of the 6000 projects that they had examined to be inadequate in some way. The total volume of the projects was two billion Swedish crowns and the volume of the fifteen projects was four and a half million Swedish crowns. Of these fifteen projects five had not been reported at all and their combined volume was 325 000 Swedish crowns. Nils-Olof at SIDA stresses the importance of putting the report in perspective and instead focuses on the 5985 projects that passed SNAO's examining. He therefore thinks that the media gave too much attention to the matter and that there is a great medial focus on SIDA and their work now. Nils-Olof stresses that "with a risk taking of 15 billion Swedish crowns it is impossible to have a flawless business." Fredrik at SADEV believes that the examining made by SNAO may redesign the image of the development assistance business and evaluation. He thinks this examining can have a positive impact on the participants in terms of creating a state of critical thinking around the topic of evaluation. However this new, investigate approach tends to create a negative attitude in the receiving countries due to uncertainty and the control element it stands for. In fact, the receiving countries in general interpret the word evaluation as another word for control. Thus instead of using the evaluation information as a means for learning it may be interpreted as a means for unveiling flaws. Despite this Fredrik sees positively on evaluation as a tool for both learning and control as it can be a way of gaining knowledge but also a way of investigating and questioning how resources have been used.



#### **4.2.2. Evaluation purposes**

All of our respondents agree that evaluation is of importance in the development assistance process. They all are of the opinion that “evaluation gives answers to important questions” as Mats at SIDA wisely puts it. In the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit the focus is on evaluation alone and they are responsible for the institutional knowledge of development assistance in SIDA. With the definition of important questions the respondents refer to evaluation as a tool for learning how the methodology works and also that it is a fundamental control mechanism. These colliding perspectives of evaluation may result in difficulties as individuals as well as organisations may have different opinions on how to prioritise between the perspectives of learning versus that of control. Mats continues by saying that the idea with the work that the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit carry through should generate learning as well as contribute to the accountability aspect. The latter aspect handles the issue of responsibility for the projects and the evaluations, which according to Mats should be in the receiving countries since it is there the learning has the most influence and can generate a continuous positive result. Susanne at SADEV believes that evaluation can be used as a memory for the organisation and states that the “the context for evaluation can depend on the project, but the aspect can always be used as to generate learning”.

Lennart at SADEV is of the opinion that development assistance only is a way of supporting receiving countries in their societal development process. He therefore also believes that the individuals that need to learn from evaluations are those who are located in the receiving countries. Hence, it is important that the whole development process as well as the evaluation itself take place in receiving countries. If the whole development process would take place in the receiving country it would generate a deeper knowledge concerning development assistance and enable the receiving countries to draw conclusions from the actions that they have taken. The focus is then on actions initiated and taken by the receiving countries and not on what donor countries have instructed them to do. Lennart states that this aspect, learning from your actions and be able to draw conclusions from them should be the core of evaluation. However, the evaluation of the whole process tends to be of greater interest to the donor country since it refers to how they give development assistance, were they should give it and to whom.

Fredrik at SADEV shares the opinion of Lennart that development assistance should contribute to a permanent learning process. He also argues that it should result in guidelines for how resources should be distributed. In this way the resources will be distributed to locations were they have seen empirical evidence of successful usage. Fredrik also highlights the aspect of evaluation as an element for investigation as to give the financiers information on the current situation as something positive. In society today there is a demand for control of the results of development assistance. This control is to be executed by an external party as to ensure correctness in the information. The control mechanism aspect of evaluation is shared by Nils-Olof at SIDA who argues that it is a fundamental purpose for evaluation.

Lennart disagrees with the above respondents as he considers the control mechanism to have a negative effect in the receiving countries since evaluation is considered as a control element. It is then interpreted as a lack of trust and reliability on their behalf. He believes that it will demotivate the receiving countries in their willingness to carry through or take part in the evaluation process. The learning aspect of evaluation, which is the most important factor, has in this perspective lost its appeal in the eyes of the receiving countries. It all derives from

the fact that the donors' demand has shifted from an interest in the accomplishments of a project to a focus on the success of the whole evaluation process. Even though Nils-Olof thinks that evaluation is a fundamental control mechanism he highlights Lennart's point of view by saying that the bottom line of development assistance must be to "do no harm", meaning that their work is supposed to help and not to hinder.

### **4.2.3. Evaluation Topics and Method**

When making decisions on what to evaluate at SADEV Lennart told us that "the organisational strategy defines the framework of what can be evaluated". The operational planning and monitoring process also distinguishes what is to be evaluated as it links decisions with strategy." Also at SADEV the General Director is the person with the final opinion in the matter and thus approves or rejects suggested evaluations. Pelle at SADEV describes the process on a practical level by explaining the important role that the personnel at SADEV has as it is their previous knowledge both professionally and academically combined with special areas of interest that establish the guidelines for what is and can be evaluated. Previous knowledge and interest in a certain topic are the fundamental basics to be able to define a suitable topic for evaluation, that is, an area where there is a lack of crucial knowledge of some sort.

During the years that Pelle has worked for SADEV he has found the topics for his evaluation projects himself but he also states that several of the topics that his colleagues have worked with have arisen from dialogues between the General Director and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. These ideas that originally come from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs are collected on a special list that within SADEV is called the "coffee room list". The idea with this list is to create an informal mode for ideas and suggestions that can spur thoughts and interest for future evaluations. A second positive effect of the list is that the list in an easy way displays potential evaluation subjects that already have an established interest. This effect is one that all the respondents have mentioned as crucial as the evaluations are only filling a purpose if someone has an interest in the evaluation findings. Despite this the evaluation projects of SADEV are not only based on the skills and interest of its staff or ideas of interest from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs but they can also arise from other external interests, one example being the evaluation of Swedfund where SADEV evaluates private sector development.

At SIDA and the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit the choice of evaluation topics derive from the interest and knowledge of the evaluators. They also take into consideration suggestions externally as well as from other departments within SIDA if the suggestions are relevant and feasible. Thus, each evaluator initiates a couple of evaluation suggestions and then the department sits down and discusses the various evaluation topics. Issues such as available resources and budget space are taken into consideration when discussing the options as the evaluators wish to optimise the resources at hand. After the discussion on types, time and available resources for each alternative, a suggestion of suitable evaluations is put forth. The chosen topics also depend upon cooperation with other donor countries as it signifies more available resources. Mats means that the international agreements such as the Paris Declaration will facilitate international cooperation as the development assistance will be more harmonised. After finally choosing the evaluation topics they are then subject to review and approval of the management of SIDA who are to contribute their point of views on each evaluation topic and approve or reject them.

Nils-Olof at SIDA discusses the choice of evaluation topics from a somewhat different perspective. He starts off by saying that it is important to look back to see the historical data and to establish how successful a development project has been in the past, thus he stresses the importance of evaluation findings when deciding on future development project and evaluations in the project committee. Credibility and results are important words in this context.

Moving on to how evaluations are carried through, it is clear that SIDA and SADEV have somewhat different approaches. Lennart at SADEV informs us that one of the main differences is that SADEV do the evaluations themselves in contrast to SIDA where evaluations are handled by the evaluation department or external consultants. Independency is another factor that Pelle thinks distinguishes SADEV from SIDA besides the difference already mentioned by Lennart. But since SADEV was established only two years ago there is still uncertainty concerning what kind of work they should be doing and what should be done by SIDA. According to Lennart they therefore are working a lot with the organisation strategy. However, the information on how they should do their work exists in theory and is also described in their project handbook, he says.

At SIDA the evaluation method in large is displayed in a manual called "SIDA at work". Relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, feasibility, sustainability, consultation and coordination and risk management are the six main principals that the manual consists of according to Nils-Olof. The main principles mentioned in the manual are not being considered as anything else than brief and general guidelines since each evaluation is unique and must be attended to accordingly. Mats mentions that the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audi uses the manual "Looking back, Moving forward" which is their primary manual. Mats thinks it is a useful manual as it can be used and understood by everyone but that it is difficult to work with guidelines on a deeper basis due to the uniqueness of each evaluation. Besides these manuals they also use working papers and policies. Different working papers function as collections of experiences from previously made evaluations. The idea with working papers on a deeper level is that they are supposed to function as the organisational memory of SIDA. Mats also tells us that SIDA also wants the external consultants to write about their experiences to include these in the organisational memory.

#### **4.2.4. Follow-up**

As mentioned in the manuals follow-up is an important feature in evaluation. The follow-up of evaluation findings can be found in the end of the evaluation process and is often a topic for discussion. All of the interviewees see it as an important part of the process but they also believe that it is here one can find the weakest link in the development assistance business. The follow-up is one of the areas within evaluation that needs to be improved as to support a strong linkage in the future. Lennart at SADEV mentions an author named Jerker Carlsson who is of the opinion that evaluation stops with advice and recommendations and Lennart agrees with him. Jerker writes that this occurrence has two main reasons. First, acting on evaluation findings requires involvement and interest. Second, what needs to be measured may not be feasible to measure and then the interest of the issue fades.

One aspect of evaluation follow-up is the dispersion of the evaluation findings. For both SADEV and SIDA it is important to spread the knowledge of their evaluations. Pelle informs us that SADEV arranges workshops and conferences if they consider the topic of the project to be of importance to a significant crowd. SADEV also creates "briefs" which is a short

information sheet. These reports are distributed to organisations and people that they think will find the information useful and significant for their line of business. Pelle tells us that they consider some of their evaluation topics to be more useful than others and that the dispersion of the results is extra important in these cases. Lennart also tells us that the dispersed information from certain evaluations is used by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs as a base for decision-making. Both Lennart and Pelle therefore stress the importance that the evaluation topics are of relevance and that the topics that are looked deeper into are needed and wanted.

In the case of SIDA the evaluations are sent to the staff of the General Director who comments and then establishes an action plan. This process is part of the Management Response system set up by SIDA. The process is time-consuming and Mats informs us that they currently are waiting on several comments and actions plans from the staff of the General Director. Mats thinks that the evaluation plans are not followed up properly and that this is an area in need of improvement. Further, he believes that SIDA has to change not only how the evaluations are followed up but also how they are performed. Mats says that perhaps the intention is that evaluations are to be followed up but that it does not work in practice. He also tells us that that the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit are content if an action plan is established at all regardless of if it is implemented and/or followed up. In Mats' opinion this has to change and he puts his hope on the new General Director of SIDA effective as of January 2008.

Mats tells us of one example of evaluation follow-up or the lack of it, which was displayed on November 2007 in Swedish news. A more than 16 minutes long news program aired about how SIDA handles corruption risks. The news story was based on an evaluation on the delicate subject of corruption handling and the evaluation generated a great deal of interest. The reason for it was that the internal audit division of SIDA had presented a similar report four years ago and the question was why no one had followed the recommendation given in that report. Mats refers to this as evidence that the follow up on evaluation looks better on paper than in actual reality. Mats continues by saying that one of the reasons why SIDA did not follow the recommendation could be that the action plan was considered to be weak. Moreover the information source of internal revision was from the staff of the General Director and there was no assurance of the quality of the information.

#### ***4.2.5. Matters to Consider in Evaluation***

In order to provide a general opinion that evaluation is a tool for learning Lennart at SADEV thinks that responsibility is the tool to use in order to achieve it. In other words he is of the opinion that it is important that the receiving countries should take responsibility in the development assistance process. He thinks that without ownership (meaning that the receiving country "own" and are accountable for the development assistance process including evaluations) development assistance would not function. The dilemma within development assistance is therefore that these countries suffer from a lack of ownership. Lennart states that if a feeling of ownership and participation was to be established in the receiving countries it would improve and also make it easier for them to see evaluation as a tool for learning, which according to all the respondents is the main purpose of evaluation. The interviewees also think that this would increase the use of the information given in the evaluations as it is easier to evaluate, reflect and take into consideration actions that you personally have been taking part in or that you have some kind of emotional bond to.

Inger at SADEV points out that she believes it is important to consider evaluation as a helping advice. On a management level it is also important to understand that the main purpose of evaluation should be to function as a tool to create competence within the organisation. To make this possible Inger tells us about the crucial part of management in making this possible. If management devotes time for evaluation and gives it a high ranking in the priority order, this will create an overall image in the organisation that evaluation is significant. This is also highlighted by Susanne at SADEV with her point of view that it is important to make evaluations that are built on topics of interest and needs from people that are working with development assistance on an operative level. She adds that there must be an ambition to use evaluations because of an actual need and that the information given also is to be used. Susanne states that "evaluation is based on the idea of sustainability", that is an evaluated project/area should continue to prosper despite the fact that the evaluation is finished and the development assistance measure has come to an end.

The purpose of evaluation is in many ways hard to define and Inger at SADEV thinks that its wide definition can counteract its reliability. Nevertheless, the general opinion of the respondents is that evaluation should be seen more as a tool for learning and less as a tool to create control. A big obstacle is that the receiving countries think differently since they often are of the opinion that it is a tool to achieve control. Inger believes that the wide range of opinions concerning the purpose of evaluation as well as the opinion that it can be used as a tool for control can influence evaluation in a negative way. This can in the end make it impossible for evaluation to fulfil its purpose. If an evaluation is read through briefly and then put aside it has not fulfilled its purpose, according to Inger. In order to do so the information that an evaluation contains must be a topic for discussion. It also has to be taken into consideration and be acted upon. Furthermore, if the purpose of evaluation was better defined on a deeper level as well by regulations and standards Inger thinks that it would facilitate not only for the people involved in development assistance but also for evaluation in itself as to survive future trends within the area of business.

Nils-Olof at SIDA mentions that another difficulty with evaluations is the topicality since they often are presented several years later. It is then important to look at what has happened since the presentation of the evaluation until the present as well as looking at the evaluation itself. Mats at SIDA shares Nils-Olof's opinion but stresses that another problem lies in the Management Response System that SIDA uses. The fault according to him is on SIDA's behalf and the SIDA board. The members of the SIDA board do not follow the recommendations given by the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit and Mats says that when reading the evaluation of the Management Response System (published in 2006) one might start to question if evaluations actually are contributing to the organisational learning of SIDA. However, Mats also points out that the present board has too many tasks and thus to little time to be able to pay enough attention to their mission as board members and thus to adequately understand the intricate matters of evaluations. Lennart at SADEV believes that the main problem of evaluation is distance between rhetoric and realisation in evaluation and argues that the link between what is done, that is evaluated, and what is learned is weak and in need of improvement.

Moreover, SIDA deals with a large amount of monetary funds and there is a political interest in controlling where the money is directed to and therefore evaluations plays a pivotal role, for instance when giving budgetary support. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has been performing checkups previously but since 2005 this is the responsibility of SIDA. This is one of many examples that Pelle at SADEV thinks reflects the hierarchy and political influences

that are taking place within the development assistance business. He is therefore of the opinion that hierarchy as well as political influences are the biggest obstacles and that evaluation is useless because of the vast amount of politics within development assistance. It is not only the decisions that the goals are based upon that can be seen as a problem, the results are also often hard to measure, for example when it comes to democracy and human rights. Lennart tells us that for example SADEV has 20 indicators and that the EU-governance has 120 indicators. His opinion is that the results of these indicators are inadequate, as most of them tend to be subjective. To obtain objective evaluations it is necessary to use objective indicators of measurement. How to actually make this happen is a difficult issue to handle according to Lennart.

The political influences that affect the development assistance business are a problem that is hard to manage according to Pelle at SADEV. He thinks that it is better to be honest by telling the public that “development assistance is political decisions”. He also adds that it is the political decisions that make it difficult for the development assistance business to achieve its goals as the political opinions differ and thus strain the development assistance business. The development assistance business has previously used evaluation to justify the conditions. This was the main purpose of evaluation from the beginning, but, as a result of politics, evaluation is neither honest nor independent according to Pelle. He concludes by stating that the entire development assistance business is hypocritical and hence also evaluation.

#### ***4.2.6. Evaluation in the future***

Evaluation has been a part of the development assistance process for a long time and the question is if this will be the case in the future as well. All of the respondents think that evaluations are here to stay and Fredrik at SADEV describes it with the words “evaluation has won the war” meaning that evaluation has a definite place in future development assistance. The amount of usage and the importance of future evaluations are aspects that result in different points of view. Three of the respondents are of the opinion that evaluation still has not reached its peak while the remaining four think that it has and that it now is heading towards declined usage and importance. The opinions also differ on the evaluation process, five respondents refer to it as a natural part of the development assistance process and two of them as part of a routine.

Nils-Olof at SIDA believes that evaluation will be integrated into the development deal itself and that the evaluation process no longer will be a separate activity. Another future change, he believes, will be to integrate the ability to measure activities into the development assistance system so that measurements can occur on a regular basis. Nils-Olof thinks that they in the future will be able to measure everything and if this is not the case, SIDA should only work in areas that are measurable. Mats at SIDA moves on and puts forth his opinions regarding requisites for achieving effective development assistance (and thus evaluation) in the future. He discusses four requirements where the first one stresses the importance of an improved management, both in SIDA internally but also in the recipient countries. Mats means that everyone in the organisation is to blame for the weak management and that points of reference for follow up are required as well as a clear time frame. Secondly the strategy for development assistance has to become a directing management tool in order to follow a clear path and communicate it internally as well as externally. Thirdly Mats mentions the incentive of the individual worker at SIDA and how this can affect the outcome of the evaluation work. For example if the work of the evaluators will be followed up and the evaluators are being

assessed according to the existing conditions it can function as an incentive to perform good evaluations. Finally, a working climate where one can learn and discuss openly about mistakes and problem can also facilitate in the matter.

Pelle at SADEV has the opinion of a true economist as he hopes that development assistance (and evaluation) soon will be merely a concept of the past. He thinks that development assistance should not exist as it is a short time solution and a source of hypocritical behaviour of the donor countries. In order to create a world without development assistance Pelle believes that political and trade policies need to be altered as to allow development countries to compete on equal terms. Capital flows are increasing in the world and at the same time the development assistance part of the capital flow has decreased. Pelle looks at this trend with great joy as it spurs on his thoughts of a future without development assistance and evaluation.

### ***4.3. Empirical summary***

Our empirical material has consisted of manuals and interviews. The manuals describe general principles of evaluation and the evaluation working process. The manuals do not describe the working process in detail since each evaluation is unique, thus making the manuals inapplicable in their daily work. The interview findings have contributed to a deeper understanding of strategic evaluation and its purpose. The interviewees have discussed the purposes of learning and control, and the difficulties that evaluation faces today and in the future. The most prominent problems appear to be regarding who is to learn from strategic evaluation, how to address the negative effects of control and how strategic evaluation findings are to be useful. The last problem mainly focuses on the effects of unfulfilled follow-up and the inadequate dispersion of strategic evaluation results. These issues will be discussed further in the coming analysis chapter, in which we will interpret and try to understand our empirical findings with the assistance of our theoretical framework.

## 5. ANALYSIS

---

*In this section we analyse our manuals and interview findings from the previous chapter. We use the concepts of evaluation and institutionalism as analysing tools to help us understand noticed behaviours and situations in SIDA and SADEV. We have chosen to divide the analysis chapter in a similar manner as the theory section. This we believe will have a clarifying effect and hence assist us to deepen our understanding and interpretation of our thesis subject and to finally approach our question at issue.*

---

### 5.1. Evaluation

All the respondents in our interviews believe that evaluation is significant in the development assistance process and Mats at SIDA means that “evaluation gives answers to important questions”. Inger at SADEV believes that evaluation has a wide definition and that this characteristic may counteract the reliability of evaluation. SIDA defines evaluation as “a careful and systematic retrospective assessment of the design, implementation, and results of development activities” (SIDA, 2007, p.2). Another definition of evaluation is as a “careful retrospective assessment of the merit, worth and value of administration, output, and outcome of government interventions, which is intended to play a role in future, practical action situations” (Vedung, 1997, p.3). The definitions differ somewhat when it comes to what part in time that evaluations are based upon. Vedung means that evaluation is to be used as to assist in the future where the SIDA definition mainly focuses on evaluation as a mean to interpret and understand the results of the past. This difference we believe may have effects on how evaluations are used and also help explain why evaluation is difficult. However, Sahlin-Andersson and Rombach (1995, p.9) argue that evaluation can be used both to show what has happened in the past and assist in creating of future guidelines. This is something Nils-Olof at SIDA discusses and he means that it is important to look back at the history as to establish how successful a development project has been in the past. He also states that decisions concerning future development projects are based upon evaluations findings, which is in line with what Sahlin-Andersson and Rombach think (1995, p.11). We agree with the thoughts of Nils-Olof and Sahlin-Andersson and Rombach.

The fact that only certain areas are focused upon in evaluation (Sahlin-Andersson and Rombach, 1995, pp.12-13) is something that all respondents agree on. When choosing what to evaluate previous knowledge and interest in an area are fundamental ingredients to define an evaluation subject as Pelle at SADEV and Mats at SIDA put it. Lennart at SADEV also discusses the importance that evaluation topics are in line with strategy, which we believe may constrain the choice of evaluation topics. The focus may also arise from an external desire, as is the case at SADEV with their “coffee room list”. The external desires also exist in the case of SIDA if SIDA and the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit find the suggestions relevant and feasible.

#### 5.1.1. Evaluation and control

Evaluation has three prominent relationship features, those of power, distrust and paradoxically also trust according to Sahlin-Andersson and Rombach (1995, pp.12-13). The power relation is displayed partly in the external evaluation topic suggestions but also within the organisations as it in SADEV is the General Director who has the final word and in SIDA



it is the board of SIDA. The distrust issue we believe manifests itself on the operational level more than in the organisational headquarters in Sweden, something that both Inger and Susanne at SADEV can agree upon. This we believe is the case since the evaluations take place in the receiving countries. The distrust relationship is linked to the trust relationship, which talks about the trust between the evaluator and the evaluated. With too much distrust the trust relationship is very difficult to achieve. Lennart discusses the negative effects of trust on evaluation when used as a control mechanism, something we interpret as a situation of too much distrust. SIDA argues that the control purpose only functions as to document results and usage of Swedish development assistance and that this purpose can be beneficial to stakeholders in Sweden as well as to local authorities in the recipient countries. Although it may be true to a certain degree we question the benefit that local parties are to gain as we believe the disadvantages in terms of distrust may be of greater significance to them. Inger is of the same opinion and states that if the recipient countries believe that evaluation is a mere control mechanism it can be an obstacle that in extreme cases may make it impossible for evaluation to function as it is supposed to. Also Lennart at SADEV agree as he means that evaluation when interpreted as a control mechanism is seen as a sign of distrust and lack of reliability in the receiving countries and he continues by adding that "evaluation today rather is seen as a method of explaining how well a donor nation is at giving development assistance". He argues that evaluation tends to be of interest to the donor country with focus on how they give development assistance, were they should give it and to whom. He believes the focus instead should be on actions initiated and taken by the receiving countries instead of what donor countries have instructed them to do which is the case today. Lennart stresses his thoughts in the matter by saying that the receiving countries should take responsibility in the development assistance process that is practice ownership. Nevertheless, a problem is that the receiving countries often suffer from a lack of ownership and that this in fact complicates the possibility for receiving countries to see evaluation in a positive way. We think that Lennart is correct in his beliefs and stress the importance of ownership in the receiving countries. On the other hand we realise the difficulty in achieving ownership due to the lack of it in the receiving countries and the opinions of evaluation as a measurement tool in donor countries.

### **5.1.2. Evaluation and learning**

Even though control is one aspect of evaluation the general opinion of all respondents is that evaluation foremost should be used for learning, which also is the second evaluation purpose according to SIDA's Policy for Evaluation Activities. SIDA even states that evaluation is for the strategic purposes of learning and accountability (SIDA, 2005a, p.75). Nils Brunsson (1995, p.53) discusses learning from evaluation and means that organisations and decision-makers are to learn from their mistakes. SIDA is of the same opinion, that "lessons learned" are to be remembered and that evaluation can be used for this purpose. SIDA goes as far as saying that the ability to learn from mistakes should be the core of its organisation (SIDA, 2005b, p.10). Thus the learning is mainly directed towards the management and personnel, which implies that focus is on organisational learning. Nevertheless Mats at SIDA says that evaluation is to contribute to learning in another aspect, that of learning in the receiving countries. This idea is connected to the concept of accountability, which is local responsibility for the projects and the evaluations. This would according to Mats take place where learning can have the most influence and generate a continuous positive result.

Brunsson talks about certain factors that need to be present as to create organisational knowledge. Access to objective and relevant information is central but unfortunately difficult

to get hold of. Nils-Olof at SIDA here mentions the topicality of evaluations, which can be problematic due to the time lag between a development assistance project and the actual evaluation. The evaluated situation may have changed during that time and thus makes the evaluation findings irrelevant. In *Looking Back – Moving Forward* Molund and Schill (2007, p.67) write that the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit hires external consultants to execute the evaluation in the receiving countries. The consultants communicate with the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit throughout the process as to ascertain that the evaluation is in line with the intention of the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit and SIDA. SIDA also has opportunities to comment and thus alter the evaluation before the final report as to make sure that the evaluation is in accordance with their desires (Molund and Schill, 2007, p.85). We consider that this behaviour may affect the objectivity of evaluation and complicate the evaluation purpose to contribute to organisational learning.

Furthermore, Brunsson (1995, pp.66-67) argues that another problem with organisational learning is the principles that organisations follow. As long as they are incorrect organisations will not be able to learn. SADEV has only existed since 2006 and does not have official principles to follow but they mean that their work is permeated by theory of how their work is to be accomplished and that these ideas have influenced their project handbook. SIDA on the other hand have six main principles to follow (relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, feasibility, sustainability, consultation and coordination and risk management) where three of them (relevance, effectiveness and sustainability) are especially important for evaluation (SIDA, 2005b, p.45). The principles are to direct evaluation towards certain areas of interest and it is within these areas that organisational learning is to occur. However, we think that these principles are very general and question the use of them on a practical level. Nils-Olof at SIDA also told us that each evaluation is unique and must be dealt with accordingly. This reinforces our disbelief in principles as a part of evaluation as to create organisational learning. As amenable as the thought of organisational learning may be we are in doubt as to the likeliness of the use of evaluation for this purpose.

### **5.1.3. More purposes with evaluation**

So far we have analysed the use of evaluation for control and organisational learning. However evaluation can be used for other purposes as well which we will discuss now. Evert Vedung (1995, p.50) discusses six areas of use for evaluation: instrumental, informative, legitimating, interactive, tactical and ritual. Since instrumental evaluation is based on randomness and an idea of an objective reality. Vedung argues (1995, p. 36) that this use is rare as evaluation topics are not chosen at random but due to subjective opinions and knowledge. All our respondents reinforce these thoughts since their experiences and knowledge often is the base for choosing evaluation topics.

The informative purpose (Vedung, 1995, p.38) is foremost a mean for politicians to gain information on specific areas and then to use it for a deeper understanding. This purpose is connected to the legitimating purpose of evaluation, which also has a political aspect, although from a somewhat different perspective. Vedung (1995, p.41) states that evaluations are needed by politicians as a mean to justify their actions and opinions and to smear those of the opponent. The political interest in evaluation is something Pelle at SADEV discusses extensively and he sees it as a problem that makes the business difficult to manage. The difficulty lies in the dishonesty that politics emanates and Pelle believes it would be better to tell the public that development assistance is just politics. He continues by adding that as long as there are hidden political influences and hierarchies in development assistance

evaluations will be useless. The thoughts of Pelle are intense and we share them partly. However, we do believe that evaluation is of use.

Elisabeth Sundin (1995, p.150) stresses the importance of evaluation being legitimate and that evaluation can be used as to validate an organisation's existence. The thoughts of evaluation as informative and legitimating we believe are strong in the development assistance business. With regards to the informative purpose of evaluation respondents from both SIDA and SADEV stress the importance to disperse evaluations and the findings to concerned stakeholders and other interested parties. The dispersion of evaluation findings is also stated as significant in the manuals. For example the "*Project Handbook*" of SADEV stresses that the project manager has to "make sure that a dispersion plan is implemented and bear responsibility for the implementation and evaluation of planned dispersion activities" (SADEV, 2007, p.9). We also believe these actions to function in a legitimating way as to show the surrounding environment what has been done and thus gain legitimacy in order to secure the future of the business.

The tactical purpose of evaluation is according to Vedung (1995, p.44) a phenomenon where facades is a common feature. We believe this can be distinguished within the work of SIDA and SADEV. We think they use evaluation to signal that something important is to take place and that the focus is on the initiation and the actual process of evaluation instead of the results. This is a usual tendency in this type of situations. Examples of this are the manuals of SIDA and SADEV where the main focus is on questions regarding the initiating moment and the process, not the actual results. The last use Vedung (1995, p.46) discusses is the ritual use of evaluation where evaluations function as "empty, repetitive measures based on the idea of what is supposed to be done". The base for ritual purpose is found in current norms and evaluation are here merely of symbolic value. Inger at SADEV tells us that evaluations at times are only read through briefly and then put aside. Here we see an example of evaluations created for the mere purpose of the process or as Evert Vedung (1995, p.25) puts it "the use of evaluations is problematic if no one takes interest in the reports and that the reports merely are put on a shelf to collect dust".

We interpret evaluations to have a symbolic value and that the evaluation process is continued foremost due to norms and a repetitive behaviour. Annika Rabo (1995, p.185) writes that "evaluations ritually display - through the production of text - that projects and programs actually do exist". This thought is also put forth by Brunsson (1995, p.68) who means that when evaluation is separated from the main business and executed by specialists evaluation is foremost a ritual. These thoughts go well in line with our view of SIDA and SADEV. In the case of SIDA the evaluations are made of external consultants, which Brunsson argues is characteristic for the ritual use. Also at SADEV we see the ritual use as SADEV as an external part, separated from the main development assistance business, has as its main task to evaluate Swedish development assistance.

## **5.2. Institutionalism**

Guy Peters (2005, pp.18-19) discusses institutionalism and means that institutionalised organisations consist of groups of individuals with common interests. SIDA and SADEV are both organisations where the individuals have a common interest, that of development assistance. Several respondents have similar experiences and they all agree that evaluation is important for the development assistance business. Further, institutionalised structures are supposed to be stable over time and affect the behaviour and opinions of the individuals as

the individuals feel a strong bond to them. When it comes to SIDA the organisation has been active since the 1950s, which we think is a sign of stability. However, to discuss stability in terms of SADEV is difficult since the organisation has only existed for two years. Nevertheless, all our respondents feel strongly for the business and it is most likely that their behaviour and opinions have been affected by the institutional structures that exist in the development assistance business. A final condition is the fact that institutional structures are based on shared values among the individuals (Peters, 2005, pp.18-19). This condition corresponds well with our respondents in some areas and not so well in others. For example, whether evaluation is positive or negative is not fully agreed upon between the respondents.

Meyer and Rowan (1977) discuss the process of institutionalisation and how formal structures are strengthened by ceremonial behaviour. This behaviour creates legitimacy for an organisation in its environment. Formal structures can occur in two situations where one is in areas with a high degree of institutionalisation where the formal structures become norm. Rationality is a strong argument in this context and a high level of policies and programs are produced (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). The Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit is in contact with policies frequently as they work according to some policies and evaluate others. Also SADEV has policies as a starting point in their work but still has no official policies of their own. Programs in the sense of established work processes exist in both organisations and are used extensively. They are put forth by our respondents as important and Mats at SIDA also thinks that they along with manuals are useful as they can be understood by everyone. Nils-Olof at SIDA agrees and stresses the importance of transparency in their line of work. We interpret these statements as rationalising behaviour, where the policies and programs as formal structures help gain legitimacy for the organisations and their business. The formal structures have become the norm on how these organisations are to behave as to be rational (Meyer and Rowan, 1977) and this we argue is an example of institutionalisation. Further, we think it is of importance for development assistance businesses to gain legitimacy as a mean of survival (Meyer and Rowan, 1977) partly due to the high level of criticism put forth in media and academic reports, partly due to the complicatedness of the business itself.

The Management Response system at SIDA is a criticised topic. Mats states that it is not functioning as it should and that decisions are unimplemented and/or not followed up. He believes that this is the case since the board members of SIDA do not read the evaluation recommendations thoroughly which generate inadequate action plans. The weak action plans can help explain the lack of follow-up of the evaluations since they are based upon the action plans. Inadequate action plans imply that follow-up is likely to be inadequate as well and the incentive to actually perform follow-up is weakened. Inger at SADEV addresses the importance of management to take evaluation seriously, thoroughly read through the material and act accordingly as to state the desired organisational behaviour with regards to evaluation. We are of the opinion that the Management Response system is a clear example of that loose coupling (Meyer and Rowan, 1977) exists at SIDA since unimplemented decisions and weak evaluation systems are a fact. Loose coupling can also result in efficiency problems. The efficiency issue can be displayed in SIDA as the evaluation process takes a long time and involves extensive waiting for decisions from the board.

SIDA and SADEV are both organisations where the output is difficult to determine and measure according to our respondents. Lennart at SADEV tells us that the indicators used to measure efficiency are often inadequate and subjective. He means that objective indicators are needed as to obtain objective evaluations, but points out that how to actually make this

happen is a difficult issue. An efficiency approach would therefore not be suitable for them. Instead we believe that SIDA and SADEV must rely on the institutionalised rules that exist in order to create output in the form of trust and hence allow them to display success (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Thus, we argue that evaluation can be interpreted as a formal structure, institutionalised as to display trust and gain legitimacy.

### **5.3. Isomorphism**

Isomorphism is when the environment surrounding an organisation greatly affects it and when the organisation attempts to fulfil institutional myths of established behaviours (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Isomorphism allows the organisation to incorporate externally legitimated factors, which in their turn are externally evaluated and thus stabilises and reduces turbulence in its environment. This behaviour also has a legitimating effect for the organisation at hand and helps it to achieve success and survive (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). SIDA and the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit use external consultants in their evaluation process, something we interpret as behaviour due to isomorphism and the desire to gain legitimacy and reduce turbulence. When discussing SADEV their situation is that of an external evaluator of Swedish development assistance, meaning that they evaluate SIDA as well as the work of the external consultants that SIDA employ. As a result SADEV also can be seen part of an isomorphic behaviour due to their unique situation as externally independent and have a legitimating effect. Other examples of the incorporation of external factor are the so called “coffee room list” at SADEV which is a document with desired evaluation topics from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and external suggestions of evaluation topics given to the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit. These factors can be seen as part of an isomorphic behaviour.

The institutional type of isomorphism is of special interest to us. It is based on ideas of political influence and legitimacy and takes place when organisations feel pressure (informal or formal) to change from other organisations upon which they are dependent. These pressures derive from cultural issues and are ceremonial. Within the development assistance business the political influence is significant as mentioned by Pelle at SADEV and we think that SIDA and SADEV experience pressures, formal and informal. The formal pressure is in the form of requirements from the government and the parliament in their mission statements. The informal pressures are more difficult to analyse as they are not as clearly seen. Nevertheless, we believe they exist but foremost within the organisations themselves, created by individual opinions and preferences. This behaviour was displayed when asking the respondents about the future for evaluation. Three of the respondents are of the opinion that evaluation still has not reached its peak while the remaining four think that it has and that it now is heading towards declined usage and importance. Nils-Olof at SIDA believes that evaluation will be integrated in the development deal itself Pelle on the other hand hopes for a future free from evaluation (and development assistance as a whole). We believe it likely that future of evaluation will go in the direction of Nils-Olof and that this idea may assist as to display effectiveness and have a legitimating feature. We find the idea of Pelle admirable but question the probability of it, at least in the near future.

### **5.4. Organisational hypocrisy**

During the interviews all parts of the evaluation process have been up for discussion but it is especially one part that all the interviewees see as extra important and that part is the follow-

up. The follow-up can be found in the end of the evaluation process and the interviewees agree on that it is here that you can find the weakest link in the development assistance business, which is the link between evaluation and follow-up of evaluation findings. Lennart at SADEV refers to an author named Jerker Carlsson who shares his opinion that evaluation often stops with advice and recommendations, a statement that clearly describes the follow-up problem. Evaluation can in these situations be seen as phenomenon that Brunsson (1989, p.27) refers to as organisational hypocrisy, which deals with certain behavioural aspects of organisations. These exist only for putting up a facade externally that signals what the organisation desires to signal to its surroundings. Brunsson (2002, p.xiii) also mentions the concepts of *talk*, *decision* and *action*. His opinion is that there is a large difference between what is said, decided and actually done. He states as actions often are left undone and thus the result of decisions are unimplemented (Brunsson, 1989, p.102). However, Lennart does not consider his and Jerker's thoughts above as signs of organisational hypocrisy. He instead states two other reasons as to why evaluation ends with advice and recommendation. The first reason refers to the involvement and interest that the evaluation findings require. The second reason is that the issue can be immeasurable and therefore lose its interest. Mats at SIDA agrees with the thoughts of Lennart but he also thinks that what is said, decided and actually done differ to a great extent, thought that are in accordance with Brunsson. One example of that evaluation looks better on paper than in reality (according to Mats) was shown in an episode on Swedish news in November 2007 in which SIDA's handling of corruption was questioned. In this particular case SIDA did not follow the action plan that had been issued and follow-up was not done. This we see as a clear example of the difference between talk, decision and action. However, Mats also argues that a possible reason why follow-up was not conducted could have been that the action plan was weak. We believe this perhaps could explain what happened but still believe that the explanation despite this resides in the concept of organisational hypocrisy and the difference between what is said, decided and done.

Brunsson (1989, p.28) says that organisational hypocrisy is clearly displayed in situations in which the connection between past, present and future is diffuse. This could in many ways be the case at SIDA as Nils-Olof is of the opinion that the topicality is one of the problems with evaluations which occurs because they often are presented several years later. Susanne at SADEV has a different point of view in comparison to Nils-Olof as she thinks that "evaluation is based on the idea of sustainability". Therefore they should continue to prosper despite the fact that the evaluation is finished and the development assistance measure has come to an end. She thinks that similarities between projects exist and also that while the context can differ between projects, the evaluation findings can always be used regardless of time or situation. Mats at SIDA thinks differently than Susanne does and agrees with Nils-Olof that the topicality of evaluations is a problem. However, he believes that the fault has occurred because of the way SIDA is organised with regards to the Management Response system. Mats thinks that the members of the SIDA board do not follow the recommendations that the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit has given to them. He also states that the contribution to learning from evaluation should be questioned due to the weaknesses in the Management Response system at SIDA. Mats thinks that this can be related to the restricted amount of time and the many tasks that the present board at SIDA are facing which can be a sign of organisational hypocrisy as the organisations has chosen to continue to use the existing Management Response System instead of trying to find a new and better alternative. That resources are scarce (Brunsson, 1989, pp.8-9) can also be a reason why the members of the SIDA board do not put in the amount of time needed in order to create a sufficient understanding of the topics. Maybe the scarce resources and turbulent environment that SIDA exists in has resulted in a need within SIDA for keeping a façade. Inger at SADEV

argues that the limited time resources that the SIDA board is struggling with go against better judgment. She thinks that evaluation should be seen as a tool that creates competence development within the organisation. To make this possible she stresses the importance of that management devote time to evaluation and also that they give it a high ranking in the order of priorities. This she thinks would create an overall image in the organisation of the significance of evaluation.

Pelle at SADEV does in comparison to the other interviewees describe the whole development assistance business as hypocritical and hence also evaluation. He argues that political decisions are making it difficult for the development assistance business to achieve its goals. This occurs mainly because the political opinions differ and thus strain the development assistance business. Pelle thinks that the influence from politics has resulted in that evaluation can be seen as neither honest nor independent. We are in agreement with Pelle when it comes to the influence of politics on the business. We however do not fully share his negative view on hypocrisy in the business. Instead we believe it can have benign effects as well, foremost that of legitimating.

### **5.5. Problems with institutionalised organisations**

Institutionalised organisations generally have two types of problems. The first problem is that of efficiency and how the organisation can combine its daily activities with the ceremonial aspects (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). We have previously discussed the lack of efficiency in SIDA with regards to the Management Response system and the time-consuming decision processes that occur. We therefore continue to state that efficiency is a problem in SIDA. In SADEV the matter is yet to be seen as the organisation still is in the starting up process. Lennart at SADEV discusses the problem of measuring results and that it complicates the objectivity of evaluation. Nils-Olof at SIDA also discusses the measurement issue but in a positive way as he believes that the ability to measure activities will be integrated into the development system in the future and thus the efficiency problem will disappear. We are however not so sure that this will be the solution to the problem as we believe that the measurement of development assistance is difficult if not impossible due to the complexity of the business and the uniqueness of each project and evaluation.

The second problem discussed by Meyer and Rowan (1977) is the high level generalization that is needed in an institutionalised environment. Standardisation is a common feature and its ceremonial products cannot be used on specific situations. One example from SIDA can be their general principles, which can be difficult to use in their day-to-day activities. Due to this, uncertainty is created and the organisations constantly need to work with the linkage of ceremonies with the daily activities. The generalisation also is displayed in the manuals used by SIDA and SADEV that have a generalist view and that according to Mats at SIDA cannot be used on a practical level due to the uniqueness of each evaluation. The SADEV "*Project Handbook*" describes basic ideas of implementation but is short and lacking in depth and details. We argue that both the efficiency and the generalist problems are represented in SIDA and SADEV and that they need to be handled. Decoupling is in theory presented as a potential solution (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). We have briefly discussed the concept of loose coupling in the section "institutionalism" which is the equivalent of de-coupling. However, a more extensive analysis will be put forth here.

De-coupling is the separation of structural elements from the daily activities and it is used by organisations as to gain and maintain legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). De-coupling

reduces conflicts and legitimates formal structures, and thereby enables formal structures to be standardised. We believe that SIDA and SADEV use de-coupling to a certain extent with the purpose of maintaining their legitimacy and thus reduce conflict. Inger mentions how important it is that the evaluation findings are read through, discussed and acted upon. However, in SIDA we have the Management Response system, which shows the opposite and is an example of de-coupling we argue. Mats at SIDA claims that the weak management of SIDA is in need of improvement. He also believes that a directing strategy is needed and that it should be communicated externally and internally. If these changes on the other hand will be carried through it is also important that they are handled with smoothness and discretion as they otherwise can damage the reputation and legitimacy as changes also show proof of previous weaknesses within the organisation. In SADEV only a few evaluations have been published so far and the dispersion process is underway. Therefore it remains to be seen if SADEV will use de-coupling or not.

Meyer and Rowan also (1977) argue that de-coupling can continue as long as good faith is present in personnel and external parties. Also as to maintain the image of good faith, investigative and evaluative measures are avoided as they may uncover situations and harm the legitimacy of the organisation. In this context evaluation is not desired as it produces illegitimacy and is considered a means of control, something that may undermine the ceremonies in institutional organisations (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Mats states that SIDA needs to enhance incentives for individual workers and that it may affect the evaluations positively. He also believes that a healthy working climate is of the essence. We agree with Mats that working climate and incentives are significant factors as they can help to maintain the image of good faith and in the long run also legitimacy.



## 6. CONCLUSIONS

---

*Under this headline we will present the results of our analysis and discuss how they can help us to answer our question at issue and what we conclude thereof. We also argue about what implications our findings may have for SIDA and SADEV in their continuous work with strategic evaluation. Finally we present areas for further research based on thoughts that have appeared throughout the thesis process.*

---

The purpose of our thesis has been to investigate the use of strategic evaluation in SIDA and SADEV. The information gathered has been both in form of manuals as well as opinions and experiences from professionals working with strategic evaluation. Our question at issue has been the following:

*What is the purpose of strategic evaluation in the development assistance organisations of SIDA and SADEV?*

We have found that strategic evaluation can be defined and interpreted in several ways and we believe that this can help to explain why strategic evaluation is a complicated matter at SIDA and SADEV. Another problematic matter is the fact that strategic evaluation only focuses upon certain areas and that the decisions regarding chosen areas are based on personal ideas, experiences or on external desires and not on accepted efficiency criteria. We believe these to be significant factors as to explain why legitimacy is such an important feature of strategic evaluation in SIDA and SADEV.

At SIDA the manuals and the respondents informed us of the two main purposes of strategic evaluation, those being control and learning. The respondents have a negative view of the control purpose of strategic evaluation and we are bound to agree. According to the interviewees the control mechanism resides on the trust relationship that refers to the trust between the evaluators and evaluated. We believe that this relationship needs to be improved in order for the control mechanism to function satisfyingly and on equal terms. The problem with evaluation as a control mechanism exists because of the lack of ownership in the receiving countries as Lennart at SADEV and Nils-Olof at SIDA put it and also because the donor countries use evaluation as a measurement tool to show how successful their business is. Our opinion is that the control mechanism exists at the expense of SIDA's second purpose of strategic evaluation, which is learning. Strategic evaluation should according to SIDA function as an organisational memory. Mats told us that the prerequisite for learning is to benefit from lesson learned in the ongoing work and incorporate them accordingly. We argue that this prerequisite still is unfulfilled in SIDA and SADEV. We base that argument on the fact that the follow-up of strategic evaluation findings is inadequate and only performed in a few cases and if performed then often in an unsatisfying manner. In SADEV we were told that follow-up does not exist yet due to the fact that the organisation has only existed since 2006. We therefore conclude that neither control nor learning can be main purposes of strategic evaluation in SIDA and SADEV.

We have found that strategic evaluation despite this can have several purposes and those of most interest to us are the tactical, legitimating, ritual and to a certain extent the informative one. To begin with the informative purpose is important due to its connection to politics and the justification of actions and opinions. We believe this is a common use of strategic

evaluation. Both SIDA and SADEV have clearly stated guidelines in their manuals when it comes to how to disperse the findings of a strategic evaluation. This we interpret as a sign of that strategic evaluation has an informative purpose in SIDA and SADEV. The tactical purpose is when strategic evaluation is used as a façade as to signal importance and relevance externally. The legitimating purpose is partly connected to the tactical purpose as the façade often has a legitimating function. Legitimacy in evaluation we believe is crucial to SIDA and SADEV as it can validate their existence. Examples are the manuals which function as a façade as they display a perceived image of work processes and guidelines and thereby legitimate the existence of SIDA and SADEV. Finally we have the ritual purpose where evaluation foremost has a symbolic function based on norms and institutionalised structures, which implications we now will discuss more explicitly.

We have come to the conclusion that SIDA and SADEV both have institutionalised features. Formal structures such as the strategic evaluation process described in the manuals enable these organisations to show legitimacy in its environment and are based on the ideas of rational behaviour. The rationality is displayed in policies and programs and is as we believe an important source as to gain and maintain legitimacy. However, the formal structures are subject to loose coupling in the sense that activities are separated from decisions which creates efficiency problem. One clear example of this we see in the Management Response system at SIDA which Mats told us about. At SADEV on the other hand the phenomenon is still yet to be seen as the organisation recently was established. Moreover we have found that SIDA and SADEV have isomorphic elements. Examples are the use of external consultants in SIDA and SADEV's unique situation as an external and independent organisation. The isomorphic features reduce turbulence and have a legitimating effect and thus facilitate the chances for the organisations to survive and prosper. We believe that the isomorphic features derive from both formal and informal pressures, where the latter foremost is of an internal kind.

An additional concept of significance to us is that of organisational hypocrisy. The opinions of our respondents were partly divided regarding this matter but we have come to the conclusion that organisational hypocrisy exists in both organisations and also to a significant extent. Examples of the organisational hypocrisy are once more the issue with the Management Response system at SIDA but also with the dispersion and follow-up of evaluation at SADEV, which we find insufficient. According to our interviewees the Management Response system at SIDA is weak as management ignores the implementation and follow-up of action plans. Despite the short period of existence for SADEV we were told that the problem with dispersion and its follow-up is already existing as they lack plans on how to follow-up dispersed findings. We believe the organisations behave this way due to scarce resources and time and the fact that they reside in a turbulent environment. Whether this hypocritical behaviour can be considered as positive or negative is something our respondents cannot fully agree upon. We are of the opinion that it can have effects in both directions, depending on the importance of the specific situation that the organisational hypocrisy aims at. We believe that this currently has a positive effect on SIDA and SADEV as it enables them to be seen as legitimate by external parties. Since the development assistance business is based on a belief that development assistance measures improve lives we think that external legitimacy is a crucial factor.

When an organisation has institutional features, it is bound to afflict upon itself two problems, that of efficiency and that of a high level of generalisation. The solution to these problems can be found in de-coupling. A prerequisite for de-coupling is the presence of good

faith in personnel and external parties which we believe are areas that need to be maintained and improved in SIDA and SADEV as well as to ascertain legitimacy and not illegitimacy.

To conclude we have found that the foremost purpose of strategic evaluation is to gain and maintain legitimacy from the organisational environment. Institutionalised structures combined with organisational hypocrisy and de-coupling we believe are crucial features as to preserve the legitimacy and in assisting our organisations in their quest for further legitimacy and towards a successful survival

### **6.1. Further research**

In the process of completing our thesis further areas for potential research have appeared. First we believe it would be of interest to investigate the implications of strategic evaluation in the receiving countries. Second we also think it would be interesting to perform a study of international character and investigate how strategic evaluation is used in other countries and organisations, compared with SIDA and SADEV as well as to discuss potential reasons for found differences (if any). A third and final thought would be to see if the concept of strategic evaluation only exists in the public sector and/or in non-profit organisations and if so, why it only exists in this context.

## 7. REFERENCES

### 7.1. *Literary references*

- Andersen, Ib (1998). *Den uppenbara verkligheten: Val av samhällsvetenskaplig metod*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Blamey, Avril and Mackenzie, Mhairi (2007). Theories of Change and Realistic Evaluation: Peas in a Pod or Apples and Oranges? *Evaluation*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp.439-455.
- Brunsson, Nils (1989). *The organisation of hypocrisy: Talk, decisions and actions in organisations*. Malmö: Liber Ekonomi.
- Brunsson, Nils (1995). Utvärdering och inläring. *Från sanningssökande till styrmedel: Moderna utvärderingar i offentlig sektor*. Sahlin-Andersson, Kerstin and Rombach, Björn (Eds.) Stockholm: Nerenius & Santerus Förlag.
- Brunsson, Nils (2002). *The organisation of hypocrisy: Talk, decisions and actions in organisations*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Malmö: Liber Ekonomi.
- Brunsson, Nils (2007). *The consequences of decision-making*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- DiMaggio, Paul and Powell Walter (1983) The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organisational Fields, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 48, No. 2, pp.147-160.
- Esaiasson, Peter et al (2004). *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. 2nd edition. Stockholm: Norstedts Juridik AB.
- Fernandes-Revuelta Perez, Luis and Keith Robson, 1999. Ritual legitimation, de-coupling and the budgetary process: managing organisational hypocrisies in a multinational company. *Management Accounting Research*, Vol. 10, pp.383-407.
- Glatthorn, Allan A. and Joyner Randy L. (2005). *Writing the Winning Thesis and Dissertation: A Step-by-Step Guide*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Gustavsson, Bengt (Ed.) (2003). *Kunskapande metoder*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Hanberger, Anders and Gisselberg, Kjell (2006). *SIDA's Management Response System*. SIDA Studies in Evaluation 06/01. Stockholm: SIDA.
- Jacobsen, Dag Ingvar (2002). *Vad, hur och varför? Om metodval i företagsekonomi och andra samhällsvetenskapliga ämnen*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Lundahl, Ulf and Skärvad, Per-Hugo (1992) *Utredningsmetodik för samhällsvetare och ekonomer*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Meyer, John and Rowan, Brian (1977) Institutionalized Organisations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony, *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.83, No.2, pp.340-363.

Molund, Stefan and Schill, Göran (2007). *Looking Back – Moving Forward: Sida Evaluation Manual*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Stockholm: SIDA.

Peters, Guy B. (2005). *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The “New Institutionalism“*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Continuum.

Rabo, Annika (1995). Utvärdering som moderna ritualer. *Från sanningssökande till styrmedel: Moderna utvärderingar i offentlig sektor*. Sahlin-Andersson, Kerstin and Rombach, Björn (Eds.) Stockholm: Nerenius & Santerus Förlag.

Rienecker, Lotte and Stray Jørgensen, Peter (2002). *Att skriva en bra uppsats*. Lund: Liber.

RiR 2007:20 *Oegentligheter inom bistånd - Är Sidas kontroll av biståndsinsatser via enskilda organisationer tillräcklig?*. Riksrevisionsverket: Stockholm.

SADEV (2007) *Projekthandbok: Riktlinjer for utvärdering vid SADEV*. Karlstad: SADEV.

Sahlin-Andersson, Kerstin and Rombach, Björn (1995). På tal om utvärdering. *Från sanningssökande till styrmedel: Moderna utvärderingar i offentlig sektor*. Stockholm: Nerenius & Santerus Förlag.

SIDA (2001). *Policy för Sidas utvärderingsverksamhet*. Stockholm: SIDA.

SIDA (2005a). *SIDA at Work – A Guide to Principles, Procedures and Working Methods*. Stockholm: SIDA.

SIDA (2005b). *SIDA at Work – A Manual on Contribution Management*. Stockholm: SIDA.

SIDA (2006a). *Annual Report of Sida Evaluation Activities 2006*. Stockholm: SIDA.

SIDA (2006b). *Hur följer SIDA upp biståndet?* Stockholm: SIDA

SIDA (2006c). *Kort om Sidas utvärderingar 2006*. Stockholm: SIDA.

SIDA (2007). *Sida's Evaluation Plan 2007*. Stockholm: SIDA.

Sundin, Elisabeth (1995) *Utvärdering och legitimitet. Från sanningssökande till styrmedel: Moderna utvärderingar i offentlig sektor*. Sahlin-Andersson, Kerstin and Rombach, Björn (Eds.) Stockholm: Nerenius & Santerus Förlag.

Vedung, Evert (1995). Utvärdering och de sex användningarna. *Från sanningssökande till styrmedel: Moderna utvärderingar i offentlig sektor*. Sahlin-Andersson, Kerstin and Rombach, Björn (Eds.) Stockholm: Nerenius & Santerus Förlag.

Vedung, Evert (1997). *Public policy and program evaluation*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Vedung, Evert (1998). *Utvärdering i politik och förvaltning*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

## **7.2. Other references**

<http://www.sadev.se/Bazment/1.aspx> 20071109

<http://www.sadev.se/Bazment/3.aspx>, 20071128

<http://www.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp?d=258>, 20071227

SVT, Kanal 1, Aktuellt, episode on development assistance and corruption after 16 minutes and 35 seconds, 20071122.

## **APPENDIX 1- Questionnaire**

1. Could you please tell us about your self and your work?
  - How long have you been working in the development business?
  - With evaluation?
  - Background before SIDA/SADEV?
  - What is most interesting in your work?
2. What is your view of Swedish development assistance?
3. What does evaluation signify for you? What is your view of evaluation?
4. Is evaluation important? If, so why and for what reasons?
5. Describe the evaluation process.
6. What problems do you face in your work?
7. Which guidelines/manuals do you use? Could they be improved and if so how?
8. What challenges do Swedish development assistance and evaluation face?
9. What is needed for efficient development assistance and evaluation?
10. What do you think about development assistance and evaluation in the future? What will change? What has to change?