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## Preface\*

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While only a few years back some people in Germany still had difficulty pronouncing the word 'evaluation' correctly or occasionally confused it with the term 'evolution', it is more popular nowadays than ever. Since the PISA assessment, the word has been on the tip of everyone's tongue.

Evaluation is 'in'. It is modern. It stands for the kind of responsible policy which is also prepared to make commitments involving the (un)intended consequences of its actions. The demand for evaluation is on the increase, and it is being satisfied. But how? With what quality? And where have all these evaluation experts for whom there is such a sudden need come from? Care is called for! The fact that it says evaluation on the label does not necessarily mean that evaluation is what is actually in the can.

It is not even certain that those who think they know what evaluation is do actually know. One of the scientific editors (!) at the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, for example, makes fun of the new study course 'Master of Evaluation' in an article entitled '*Werdet Werter*'<sup>1</sup> (12 September 2004). But he fails to recognize that evaluation is, of course, by no means merely a matter of pronouncing 'value judgements', but rather the analytical 'assessment' of facts which have been gathered as objectively as possible with the aid of mostly social scientific research methods.

So if not even the *FAZ* knows what evaluation is, some enlightenment seems to be necessary. This task is being tackled by a trilogy of books published in the series 'Social Scientific Evaluation Research'. The first book in the series, entitled *Evaluation Research*, which has just appeared in its third edition, covers the social basics and selected research fields of evaluation.

The second book, *Evaluation and Quality Development*, not only combines these subjects, which have not otherwise been associated with each other much so far, but also develops a methodology with which performance and related data can be used for rational programme management.

This *Practitioner Handbook on Evaluation* concludes the trilogy of basic literature. It has been conceived for practical use. Information on the various different evaluation instruments and how to handle them is put across in such a way to be of use not only to evaluation clients but also to the evaluators themselves in the planning and conducting of their evaluations.

I hope, as the editor both of this book and of the series ‘Social Scientific Evaluation Research’, that the methodological demands clients make on evaluation will grow, that the qualifications of the evaluators will always be a step ahead of those demands, that the quality and thus also the usefulness of evaluation will continue to rise, and that this book may make a modest contribution to its doing so.

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Bürstadt and Saarbrücken, January 2010

## NOTES

- \* For reasons of readability only, masculine pronoun forms are generally used in this book. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.
1. Translator’s note: this title, alliterative in German, means something like ‘Become judges!’