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Evaluation of Empowerment and Effectiveness

Universal Concepts?

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L'important est de savoir si certaines phrases, certains énoncés vous induisent à penser, vous emmènent, même éventuellement, dans une rêverie . . .

(Guattari, Spire, Field & Hirsch, 2002)

The question of the effectiveness of health promotion (HP) interventions has captured the attention and energy of a number researchers, superseding the continual debates on delineating the field of HP vis-à-vis that of public and community health. The central problem is the following: how can we claim that a HP intervention is effective? The informed reader will understand that this includes subject matter which cannot economize on paradigm-oriented reflections, given four separate yet intertwined ontological, epistemological, teleological, and methodological dimensions (Gendron, 2001). The interplay of all these beliefs and values, previously stated by Kuhn, leads to a situation where our vision of the world and our relationship with it conditions both the methodological arsenal useful for considering the effectiveness of an intervention, and our vision of the concept of effectiveness itself.

Some think that HP is not founded upon any disciplinary epistemology, and therefore it is illusory to develop “*evidence rules*” (McQueen & Anderson, 2001). Others seek to adapt HP vocabulary to that of bio-medicine (Green & Glasgow, 2006) preferring terms like external validity for example, a richly meaningful term to positivists, to terms such as the nature of transferability of conclusions, one used more frequently by constructivists. These ponderings upon scientific criteria, which are specific to the HP discipline, are echoed in the discipline of program evaluation. The epistemological suggestions given by the defenders of “Real World Evaluation” (Bamberger, Rugh & Mabry, 2006) take up Guba’s and Lincoln’s notorious propositions of a method for evaluating the effectiveness of actions, mirroring those of their colleagues in the health field (Carvalho, Bodstein, Hartz & Matida, 2004; Lock, Nguyen & Zarowsky, 2005). This suggests for example, studying the *contribution* of certain factors, and not the *determinants* on the effects of interventions. The issues surrounding the evaluation of HP effectiveness are numerous. Considering the current state of our reflection on the subject, this chapter is centred on two essential concepts

according to the authors, but which have not been sufficiently addressed in the literature on HP effectiveness.

The first section is dedicated to the proposition linking the methodological and teleological elements of HP, specifically the concept of empowerment, which remains central to HP practice. The debates on this concept are as old as the tools available for the evaluation of HP effectiveness which are still rare. But, if empowerment is a process, it is also an intended outcome of HP the extent to which requires verification in order to determine the effectiveness of HP. How can one then evaluate empowerment as an outcome of an HP program*, recognizing that it is a right of passage which is obligatory in order to demonstrate effectiveness. This section focuses on the quest “*for appropriate indicators for health promotion success*” (McQueen & Anderson, 2001). The second section features an epistemological and ontological discussion concerning the concept of effectiveness itself. Above and beyond the paradigmatic issues, which imply an understanding of effectiveness, and the manner by which one can account for it scientifically is the core question of the universality of the effectiveness concept.

Before delving into the crux of the subject, it is prudent to state that this chapter does not have any other aim aside from soliciting debate and reflection around HP effectiveness. It consists purely of an attempt to broach the subject in an exploratory fashion. We hope that this effort is understood as a way to share our initial thoughts in order to enrich the existing dialogue and which could eventually be used to advance the state of knowledge through a dialogue between different academic disciplines, cultures, societies and languages.†

How to Evaluate Empowerment as a Health Promotion Outcome?

We will not reiterate here the multitude of existing discussions regarding the definition of HP, since the literature on this topic is abundant. For the purpose of this chapter, we will therefore adopt a definition proposed by the experts, for it is useful in initiating our discussion:

health promotion is fundamentally about ensuring that individuals and communities are able to assume power to which they are entitled [. . .and] the primary criterion for determining whether a particular initiative should be considered to be health promoting, ought to be the extent to which it involves the process of enabling or empowering individuals or communities (Rootman et al., 2001).

* The same question is posed by the defenders of “empowerment evaluation” (Ridde, 2006).

† We have, although in vain, made an effort to involve academics from other contexts in the development and drafting of this chapter, in order to ensure a broad representation of the various concepts from a perspective in the Arab-Muslim context and that of West Africa. We hope that this will be possible in a future exercise of this nature.

If empowerment, a flagship value of HP for over 25 years and recognized as such in the Ottawa Charter, is at the heart of this definition, then it is interesting that we can also find its dual nature hidden herewith. In fact, empowerment is on the one hand a process, and on the other, it is an expected outcome of such a process. It is precisely this particular process which differentiates HP from public health, which relies heavily on a technocratic process as Ridde (2007) argue, and from community health, which employs a participatory approach. In terms of generating change, we conceive empowerment as a proximate effect of an HP process, the distal effect being that of the reduction of social inequalities in health (Ridde, 2007). The challenge of evaluating empowerment as a proximal outcome is that this concept remains “*in the early stages of development [. . .] requiring the development of new research procedures and technologies*” (Rootman et al., 2001). Very little ground has been covered in this area since this fact was documented nearly 15 years ago (Boyce, 1993) and that others still demand the “*refinement of measurement tools*” (Wallerstein, 2006). It therefore remains an essential sphere since as long as we are unable to verify that a HP intervention has achieved this outcome, we will not be able to make any statement about its effectiveness. The demonstration of the effectiveness of empowerment as a *process* has already been attempted, now we must dwell upon the *outcomes*. Obviously in different contexts and cultures, the understanding and interpretation of such a concept is delicate, as is also the case for its operationalization for evaluation purposes. Indeed, the evaluation of a concept requires its transformation into different components/dimensions/variables (according to the school of thought), and the consideration of construct validity. Is the concept of empowerment, as for that of effectiveness, a universal one? One must even further explore and reflect upon this question given that the majority of scientific literature comes from an epistemic community writing in the English language, and hence the only existing source of the final analysis on the effectiveness of the process of empowerment (Wallerstein, 2006). Notwithstanding, some recent attempts have been made to translate this concept or suggest useful dimensions for its evaluation, generally carried out on three planes: individual, organizational, and community. For each one of these levels, many authors have developed, with varying degrees of detail and differing epistemological positions, the origins of a list of indicators to study in substantiating the reach of empowerment. Wallerstein (2002) proposes that the outcomes at the community level are of three types: participation, control and critical conscience. Still looking at the community level, Rifkin (2003) suggests six dimensions: capacity building, human rights, organizational sustainability, institutional accountability, contribution, and a positive environment. Peterson and Zimmerman (2004) attempted the same type of analysis, but with regard to organizational empowerment, picking up the different expected outcomes (and processes) noted by many other authors.

The objective of this chapter is not to present a review of the literature, but rather to illustrate that it is imperative that empirical work in this area is developed,

namely in other languages and cultures where use of such indicators has already been made. Studies show that theoretical constructs of empowerment as an outcome are as rare as the cultural and social diversity of their attempts. But, diverse attempts are not absent because, for example, Nepalese villagers have already tried to account for the dimensions of community empowerment with community competencies and with changes at the social structural level (Purdey, Adhikari, Robinson & Cox, 1994). Since this chapter is written according to a perspective of change, it is therefore useful to relate two recent developments that differ from the epistemological point of view of empowerment evaluation as an outcome. Neither are well known yet because they were both conducted in the French language.

The first pertains to individual empowerment, which has been more widely studied than organizational and community empowerment (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). In order to evaluate the outcomes of a program targeting the promotion of well-being for children under three years of age and their parents, Le Bossé and his colleagues (Le Bossé, Dufort & Vandette, 2004) developed a specific tool. A measurement scale for psycho-sociological markers for empowerment of parents – empowerment being translated into French as “*pouvoir d’agir*”, i.e. “power to act” – was created following many theoretical and empirical evaluation steps over a five year period. The creators of this instrument, which is still in the experimental stage, believe that it could be used in contexts different from the one for which it was created as long as the items for each of the dimensions are adapted accordingly to the relevant context of the study. The tool is composed of three dimensions and twenty-two items measuring the propensity to act, the critical conscience, and finally the perception of self-efficacy. The psychometric performance of this exploratory instrument seems to be interesting, with the three factors explaining 65% of the variance.

The second attempt is of a different paradigmatic nature and relates individual, organizational and community empowerment. For Ninacs (2002), individual empowerment corresponds to a succession of steps working together, like four threads of the same rope, according to four dimensions: participation, technical competencies, self-esteem, and critical conscience. The transition through these steps, along with their interaction, permits their mutual strengthening, and allows an individual to go from one step without much power* to a state where s/he is able to act as a function of his/her own choice. The four threads (dimensions) corresponding to organizational and community empowerment are sensibly the same as those of individual empowerment (Figure 22.1).

Each one of these four dimensions has been specified with regard to numerous (more or less) precise indicators. For example, the seminal work of Arnstein (1969) was of great benefit in order to develop the manner by which the extent of individual participation is evaluated. Communication at the community level per-

* Ninacs said that the process for people is from a disempowered position to a powered one. But it’s not clear for us if it possible that someone can be completely disempowered for everything in one’s life. This is why we preferred to say that an individual starts from one step without much power and not disempowered.

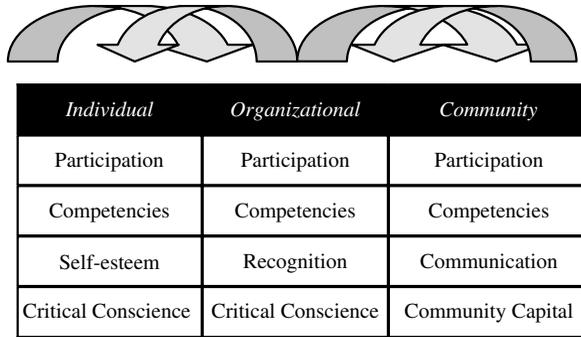


FIGURE 22.1. Dimensions of empowerment

Source: Adapted from (Ninacs, 2002)

tains to i) the effective circulation of general information, ii) access to information required for successfully completing specific projects, and iii) transparency in decision-making processes. We will not present a list of all the indicators here, due to space limitations, but most importantly because a number of theoretical efforts from this view point remain to be rendered. This theoretical proposal including the four dimensions has recently inspired many evaluators in applying it.* For example, borrowing the empowerment evaluation (EE) approach, we have used it to analyze, *a posteriori*, an evaluative process undertaken for a street workers program in Quebec (Ridde, Baillargeon, Ouellet & Roy, 2003). In fact, one of the main criticisms of this approach is the difficulty of being able to “conceptualize outcomes of EE in this way and to demonstrate the links to EE processes” (Cousins, 2005). Also in Quebec, the indicators suggested by Ninacs (2002) were adapted in order to better grasp the context of a collective kitchens community program (Racine & Leroux, 2006). The authors found it significant to assure that empowerment is not a generalized state and that it consists of being able to qualify it to then evaluate it. Evaluating empowerment of one’s own life, as a global concept, is indeed a very delicate exercise, assuredly an impossible one. Likewise, the evaluators of empowerment in this project specified that it is contingent on the program itself, that is to say empowerment on food security. In this way researchers were able to obtain, in a concrete and observable way, the four components of empowerment and to propose corresponding indicators. The practical competencies at the individual level manifest themselves through i) strategies for food security utilized outside the kitchens, ii) capacities to cook, iii) communication skills and team work (tolerance), and iv) the ensemble of the capacities developed by the participants. In contexts very different from the one it which it was created, this tool has already been used in two other cases. In Haiti, it proved useful for evaluating the expected outcomes of a program implemented

* These experiences are in part re-grouped in a special issue of the Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation (2006, Vol 21, n°3).

by a Swiss organization, *Terre des hommes* (Ridde & Queuille, 2006). Taking into account the little time outsourced for this evaluation (two weeks), as is frequently the case for international development work, the use of this tool was greatly appreciated by participants allowing them to have a simple and useful visual representation of a complex, multi-dimensional concept. In Africa, training courses were conducted based upon this tool in order to build the capacities of community support managers of an AIDS prevention project to support sex workers in improving and strengthening their empowerment (Bernier, Arteau & Papin, 2005). Moreover, the originality of this Canadian-African experience was characterized by a double process to empowerment, including the person who is providing the support as well as the individual or group who is being supported. The four components of empowerment were mobilized in parallel in a support process based upon four axes of practice: personal and structural context, involvement of those who are impacted, the coinciding of “here and now”, and finally the stimulation of critical conscience.

In this first section, we wanted to succinctly convey the relatively few new attempts at evaluating empowerment outcomes and show that much more territory remains to be explored, namely in the construct validation of these proposals and the accuracy of empowerment indicators. While these experiences are encouraging, the advancement of knowledge in this respect seems urgent and an integral part of any reflection on HP effectiveness.

The Meaning of the Effectiveness Concept

As we stated in the introduction, current initiatives to reflect on HP effectiveness all start from the same postulate: that effectiveness would be the achievement of objectives that were established at the beginning of the intervention.* Is it possible to think of effectiveness differently? Without any other pretension than that of stimulating debate, the aim of this section is to show that it is possible to envisage that the emic perspectives (i.e. insider perspectives) of effectiveness vary from one society to another. We will not venture into the realm of cultural relativism which at times has done harm to public health (Fassin, 2001). We simply wish to stimulate this reflection from two philosophical standpoints and with two examples which illustrate that the understanding of effectiveness can be specific to a society.

In general, it is appropriate to credit the mechanical vision of effectiveness (the activities/output must meet their objectives/outcomes), and its lot of performance indicators, to the defenders of *New Public Management*, most certainly rationalists. But maybe things are not as simple as that, they actually appear more

* In chapter 21 (Potvin, Mantoura & Ridde), we also think that the other postulate which predominates in these initiatives on effectiveness consists of a utilitarian vision of effectiveness, frequently putting the notion of equity to the side.

complex since “as soon as an individual undertakes an action, whatever it might be, it then begins to escape his intentions” (Morin, 2005). We are looking to the idea that the programs themselves are trivial, which in the words of Edgard Morin (2005), signifies that “if you know the inputs, you know the outputs; you can predict the behavior as soon as you know that which goes into the machine.” Input and output are words in the everyday vocabulary of evaluators and planners who master the widespread use of logical frameworks and other management models which center on intervention results.

But could the effectiveness of an intervention, rest upon an analysis of its capacity to adapt itself, taking into account the context and the environment regardless of initial intended objectives? Piaget said yesterday and Le Moigne reiterates today, action and knowledge go hand in hand, they are inseparable (Saillant, 2004). The recourse to philosophy can certainly help us here, and the conference lecture on effectiveness delivered by Jullien (2005) is definitely of assistance. Without going into the details of Jullien’s arguments, his presentation demonstrated that the notion of effectiveness itself is culturally and socially constructed. Looking to China in order to “put some distance between the thinking from which we come”, the author distinguishes two ways of conceiving effectiveness (Figure 22.2).

On one side, the classical European school of thought, of Greek heritage, conceives effectiveness as being the capacity to standardize, to create an ideal model, a plan setting out a goal that one will try to achieve through a heroic act according to a means-to-an-end relationship. An ideal model is thereby projected onto reality.* For readers accustomed to program evaluation approaches and concepts, they will

In order to be effective, one must . . .	
Classic European School of Thought	Classic Chinese School of Thought
<p style="text-align: center;">. . . <i>Modelling</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a model, an ideal • Draft a plan, establish a goal • Means-End • Heroism of the act 	<p style="text-align: center;">. . . <i>Surfing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rely upon the supporting factors • Take advantage of the circumstances • Acknowledging the potential of a situation • Transform

FIGURE 22.2. Two different understandings of effectiveness

Source: Adapted from (Jullien, 2005)

* Jullien (2005) moderates his dichotomy by saying that we keep this typical ideal model to render our reasoning more understandable, by taking up Aristotle’s propositions on the notion of caution (*phronésis*) as a way to mediate between the plan and its implementation, or the notion of *métis* present in ancient Greek and translated as the capacity to take advantage of the circumstances. For a recent critic of the dichotomy, see Billeter, 2006.

immediately and instinctively make a link to the suggestions of those who adhere to *theory-driven evaluation* (Chen, 2005), logic models and results-based management. The ideology of performance (Heilbrunn, 2005) underlies this worldview and its related planning processes. From another perspective, the classical Chinese school of thought maintains that the effectiveness of action is determined by the capacity of its managers to adapt, to benefit from and take advantage of circumstances which present themselves by relying upon the supporting factors. Non-knowledge, or the absence of knowledge, is at the core of this vision, which poses serious difficulties to Cartesian thinkers. As stated by another traditional Chinese specialist, “*to listen without knowledge is not a failure, but rather a learning method [which permits] perceiving the possibilities*” (Eyssalet, 2006). Here, “*the strategist is thus invited to use the situation as the starting point, not necessarily a situation such as I would formalise it beforehand, but rather a more fitting situation in which I am engaged and deep within which I try to seek or locate the potential and how best to harness it*” states Jullien (2005). All managers have read Sunzi’s famous classic text “The art of war” in which the first chapter addresses evaluation (or rather *evaluability assessment*). Jullien has done a rereading and interpretation of this work to show that victory, or otherwise stated, effectiveness, is understood as the result of the potential offered by a situation, and not as the application of a plan corresponding to a pre-designed model to achieve an objective at all costs. “*You miss the outcome because you forced it*” whereas you should “*let it (the process) flow and take its course, yet without neglecting it either*” (Jullien, 2005). Thereby, we are reminded by the differentiation between the determinants of health and the “contributors” to it, that it is about transforming (in an indirect way) rather than acting compulsorily (in a direct way). Edgard Morin, surely having been influenced by Chinese thinking, states that “*the development of a strategy entails the undeviating vigilance of the person at the core of the activity, takes into account the potential hazards, modifies the strategy in progress and underway, and possibly, if need be, torpedoes the activity which might have taken a dangerous path. Strategy is like navigating with a rudder on uncertain seas*” (Morin, 2004). Those who are familiar with evaluation trends will have most certainly made the connection between the realist approach (which is not against theories) and namely the Pawsonian equation where $M + C = O$, that is to say that the evaluation of effectiveness must be capable of locating which mechanism (M) works in which context (C) to produce what particular outcome (O) (Pawson, 2006). If this realist approach to evaluation is still theoretical and unclear, a distinct number of attempts are currently underway in the HP field to apply and sidestep the deadlock of evidentiary data and classical European thought. We will not go into the details of the related theoretical propositions and practical considerations here as far as the evaluation of HP effectiveness is concerned, as they are already widely debated in a number of other publications (Hills, Carroll & O’Neill, 2004; Potvin, Gendron & Bilodeau, 2006).

This reflection around two philosophical traditions now brings us to two examples of the way in which HP effectiveness can be very specific to one distinct society: an Indigenous perspective within Canada. First, it must be said that the current health status of indigenous people, and the health disparities they suffer,

are understood as rooted in the colonial relationships experienced with Canada (Adelson, 2005). Therefore, the promotion of health in indigenous communities is intricately tied to the revitalization of indigenous peoples' communities through self-governance efforts. Indigenous understandings of health are holistic, rooted in relationships to family, community, all living things, the earth, and all of creation. Traditional, indigenous understandings of health go beyond physical health of the individual, and consider mental, emotional and spiritual health. This holistic model can be referred to as the "Circle of Life" and extends beyond the individual to include relationships to the community. The model teaches that everything and everyone has something to contribute to the circle, which can be understood as the community. In the "Circle of Life" everything is connected and equally important where one's well-being is related to the community and connected to elements of the earth. Building on the strengths of the circle makes it strong and healthy for the next seven generations. Seven generations is a concept that signifies the long term impacts that should be considered when making decisions. Holistic and positive concepts of health are shared with those of health promotion. As well, the values of social justice, community control of the determinants of health through empowerment and participation echo those of indigenous communities. From an indigenous perspective, HP is simply a newer term to describe the traditional way of life that indigenous communities are striving to revive today.

Effectiveness in health promotion would therefore be reflected in approaches which support self-governance efforts to revitalize and build strong communities. Effectiveness can be sought in endeavors that are based upon indigenous understandings of health which build on the strengths of the community and support the broader goals of self-governance. Two examples of effective HP interventions are provided. The first, from northern Ontario, is an urban indigenous women's hand drumming circle which has been demonstrated as effective in promoting health (Goudreau, 2006). Through participating in this cultural practice, these women are reviving their culture and building on existing strengths in their community. In this study, women hand drummers found physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual benefits of drumming as well as cultural and social support within the hand-drumming circle. They expressed finding healing, their voice, empowerment, renewal, strength, and *Mino-Biimadiziwin* (an Ojibwe word that translates into "good life"). Another example is the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project, where the Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) community of Kahnawake mobilized efforts to prevent diabetes with the long term goal of healthy future seven generations. The result was a community-directed and owned research and intervention collaboration that has promoted healthy lifestyles, built capacity and created meaningful knowledge that continues to serve current health promotion efforts to address high rates of diabetes in the community (Bisset, Cargo, Delormier, Macaulay & Potvin, 2004; Delormier, Cargo, Kirby & McComber, 2003). Therefore, what one must keep in mind from this indigenous perspective is that effectiveness, in this particular social context, cannot be limited or contained to a simple confirmation of some indicators of loose environmental outcomes. Effectiveness must be studied and seen in a holistic sense, taking into account a

myriad of elements, of which empowerment and self-governance are central concepts. This of course poses some serious methodological problems and concerns given the discussion included in the first section of this chapter. In order to link this indigenous perspective to the philosophical reflections of this section, the concept of ecosophy (social ecology) from the philosopher Guattari (1989) can be useful to qualify this vision of effectiveness. In fact, “ecosophy” postulates that it is impossible to transform environments without changing mentalities and rebuilding the social fabric at the same time. We do not have the space available here to go further in-depth, but we would simply add that “ecosophy” pitches a “rhizome” which spreads its roots and grows under the surface, more than an arranged logical, hierarchy as a tree, pushing up and out. And to attest to this link between HP and post-modern philosophy, this same bulb came to the rescue of the last book on HP in Canada, for which it was used as the image to depict HP (Dupéré et al., 2007; Kickbusch, 2007); therefore, clearly an analogy and image whose link to HP should be carefully watched and followed in the future.

The comparative approach presented here, starting from two different schools of thought and elaborating an indigenous perspective, presents a true methodological challenge. In fact, the transition through a Weberian creation of such general ideal-types is a delicate matter and presents the risk of creating “*barriers which can become impossible to overcome and constitute truly solid logical walls which on the one hand help to protect us, and on the other can confine us*” (Jacquard, 2006). That being said, this section’s primary aim was to reconsider the implications of a universal nature of the effectiveness concept, similar to the case of equity (see Potvin, Mantoura and Ridde chapter in this book), as a debate that could be further pursued.

What if Effectiveness became Responsiveness?

Realists perceive social change as transformational and the social system as an “open system” which is a product of literally endless components and forces (Pawson, 2006). So, if we accept to adhere to a realist position for the evaluation of effectiveness and to a mode of thinking where permanent and on-going adaptation of a program to its environment has precedence over meeting an objective, then to be effective is to be responsive.* Responsiveness is considered as one of the objectives of health systems by WHO and as one of the evaluation criteria of HP programs (Potvin, Haddad & Frohlich, 2001). This vision with regard to programs which should adapt, contradicts that which describes the life of a project characterised by an unavoidable cycle from the needs assessment to steps for planning and implementation. The understanding of such a step-by-step process surely finds its roots in the 1950’s study of public policy by American *stagists* (deLeon, 1999). Evaluation often

* Experts in organizational theory, following Parsons, try to show that the performance of organizations (and through the expansion of programs) can be judged on the scale of the balance between four interconnected dimensions: i) achieving goals (effectiveness), ii) production, iii) maintaining values and iv) adaptation (Champagne & Guiset, 2005).

becomes the ultimate step. Others sometimes add sustainability or even capitalization to close the circle. However some believe, on the contrary, that the process of HP practice is neither linear nor cyclical. Rather, one could conceive of these practices as a series of four sub-processes which are both concurrent and interdependent: *planning, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability*. Although the definitions of the first three terms are well-known, those of sustainability are less understood. In French, we have two words to describe the sustainability process (*pérennisation*) or level (*pérennité*). The first one is concerned with the process which permits for the continuation of activities and outcomes related to programs. And contrary to what one would normally think, actions and interventions which are conducive to high sustainability levels must begin simultaneously with the implementation of the program, and not at the end (Pluye, Potvin, Denis, Pelletier & Mannoni, 2005). The second one (sustainability level) is the result of this process – manifesting itself in the organizational routines – which can be evaluated as a function of various degrees, the highest being that of standardization (the integration of these routines as programmatic outcomes of public policy). We will not go any further into this proposal, undoubtedly new to the field, but of which the conceptual details and empirical illustrations from Quebec and Haiti are presented elsewhere (Pluye, Potvin & Denis, 2004; Ridde, Pluye & Queuille, 2006). Let us then retain that these four sub-processes are concomitant for when we implement a program (implementation), we are constantly asking ourselves about what is happening (evaluation), we are consistently monitoring what was scheduled to happen (planning) with an on-going preoccupation with the way to proceed in support all the aforementioned processes, (the sustainability process) often understood as the program's weakest link.

Conclusion

The elements for reflection suggested in this chapter offer three research avenues, or at the least, three interesting subjects for further investigation by those working in HP effectiveness. The first research path, and the most urgent in our opinion, addresses the evaluation of the intended proximal outcome of HP interventions, otherwise stated, empowerment. We have demonstrated that certain theoretical and empirical initiatives are under way, but there remains a great deal of distance to be covered. We hope that this chapter will serve as a window to better see and acknowledge the work which has been done in Quebec in order for these assumptions to be tested in multiple contexts, the only useful approach for their eventual validation.

The second research path is related to the concept of effectiveness itself. It requires a true epistemological and interdisciplinary dialogue between HP academics, scientific theorists and practitioners working in the field. The reflections related to HP effectiveness cannot, in our estimation, overlook an interdisciplinary, and most importantly, an intercultural dialogue. The understanding of effectiveness as a concept (is this a transdisciplinary term?) should supersede any epistemological or geographic boundaries.

The final suggestion most certainly demands research related to the conceptualization of HP interventions. The topics that we have covered in the previous pages seem to converge in the same direction and summon the necessary re-definition of HP interventions and their evaluation according to a realist paradigmatic perspective. We should organize ourselves so that the interventions target the reduction of social inequalities in health, as the distal outcome, through the intermediary of an empowerment process which rests upon the five pillars of HP. Above and beyond the “objective” verification of the scope of reducing social inequalities in health, the production of other proximal outcomes should be considered by the implementation of HP interventions. The effectiveness of these HP interventions should be studied with respect to their capacity to adapt to the surrounding environment, to take advantage of the altering circumstances and benefit from the events in sight to reduce social inequalities in health. It involves being aware that these interventions are implemented according to an intertwined process comprised of four elements, all of which are equally important, and should follow an empowerment approach, which is also composed of four other inter-related elements. With reference to Buddhist philosophy, we would even dare to qualify the HP process as the *noble eightfold path* which leads to the reduction of social inequalities in health. Indeed, in Buddhism, the noble eightfold path refers to the way which carries one to the suspension of suffering, to Nirvana, these eight elements not be followed sequentially but *simultaneously* by the disciple. This dual image of four elements of HP can at last be illustrated by Figure 22.3 which incorporates three temporal levels, which should be read from the top to the bottom, either for the process, the proximal outcome, or the distal outcome.

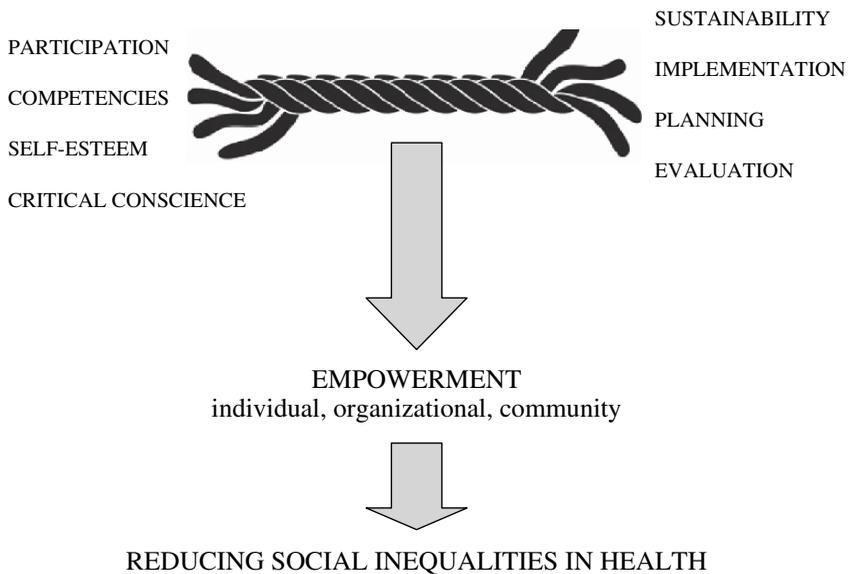


FIGURE 22.3. An attempt to illustrate the process, the proximal and the distal outcomes of health promotion interventions

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