POLICY EVALUATION

DEFINING POLICY EVALUATION

WHAT IS POLICY EVALUATION?

Policy evaluation is an analytical activity aimed at the production of information and knowledge in order to judge public policies, with the aim of improving them

THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF THE DEFINITION

1. It entails collecting or producing data through appropriate methods
2. It implies a criterion for comparison (expectations).
3. It may regard both *process* and *outcomes*
4. It may regard the goals of the policy/law, or – better – the policy problems
5. It is aimed at learning and policy change

WHY POLICY EVALUATION? PUBLIC POLICIES OFTEN FAIL OR PARTIALLY SUCCEED

Designing

Monitoring implementation

Accountability

Learning and redesigning

PUBLIC POLICY IS:

a set of actions that influence the solution of a collective problem

a problem is a need, a demand or an opportunity that can be answered through action

THEREFORE:

The success of the policy is the ability to solve the problem

THEORY OF CHANGE &THEORY OF ACTION

WHY POLICIES FAIL?

Policies can fail:

1. **because they are badly designed**
2. **because they are badly implemented**

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICY DESIGN

In order to solve a collective problem very often there are many available options.

The first question therefore is why the selected option is supposed to work.

TAKE HOUSING POLICY: HOW MANY TOOLS CAN WE USE?

The problem is to provide affordable houses for the poor

Which design?

1. rent control
2. rent subsidies
3. public housing
4. subsidising self-construction
5. subsidising landlords
6. etc.

HOW DO DIFFERENT DESIGNS WORK?

Each of these “solutions” can work better or worse depending upon a series of conditions and assumptions.

For instance in the case of rent control the main condition is that there is an adequate stock of houses for rent, and the main assumption is that all landlords will comply with the law (no black market, no elusion, etc)

1. THEORY OF CHANGE: WHY IT WORKS

The set of these conditions and assumptions is what we call the "theory of change" and the first task of the analyst is to identify it and evaluate it on two counts:

1. If it is clear enough
2. If it is reasonable and convincing

BENEFICIARIES AND TARGETS

Theories of change permit to distinguish between:

BENEFICIARIES, i.e., who benefits from the policy

TARGET GROUPS, i.e., who needs changing his/her behaviour for making the policy work

Sometimes beneficiaries and target group are the same (e.g. rent subsidies), others they refer to different groups (environmental policy, etc.)

A BIT OF PRACTICE:

For the following interventions, identify theory of change, the target and beneficiaries:

Intervention 1: Flexible energy tariffs for reducing energy consumption.

Intervention 2:Subsidies for company training for young workers.

Intervention 3: New IT infrastrucrure for public data management and online pay.

Intervention 4: Training public personnel for the IT infrastructure.

THEORY OF ACTION: HOW IT WORKS

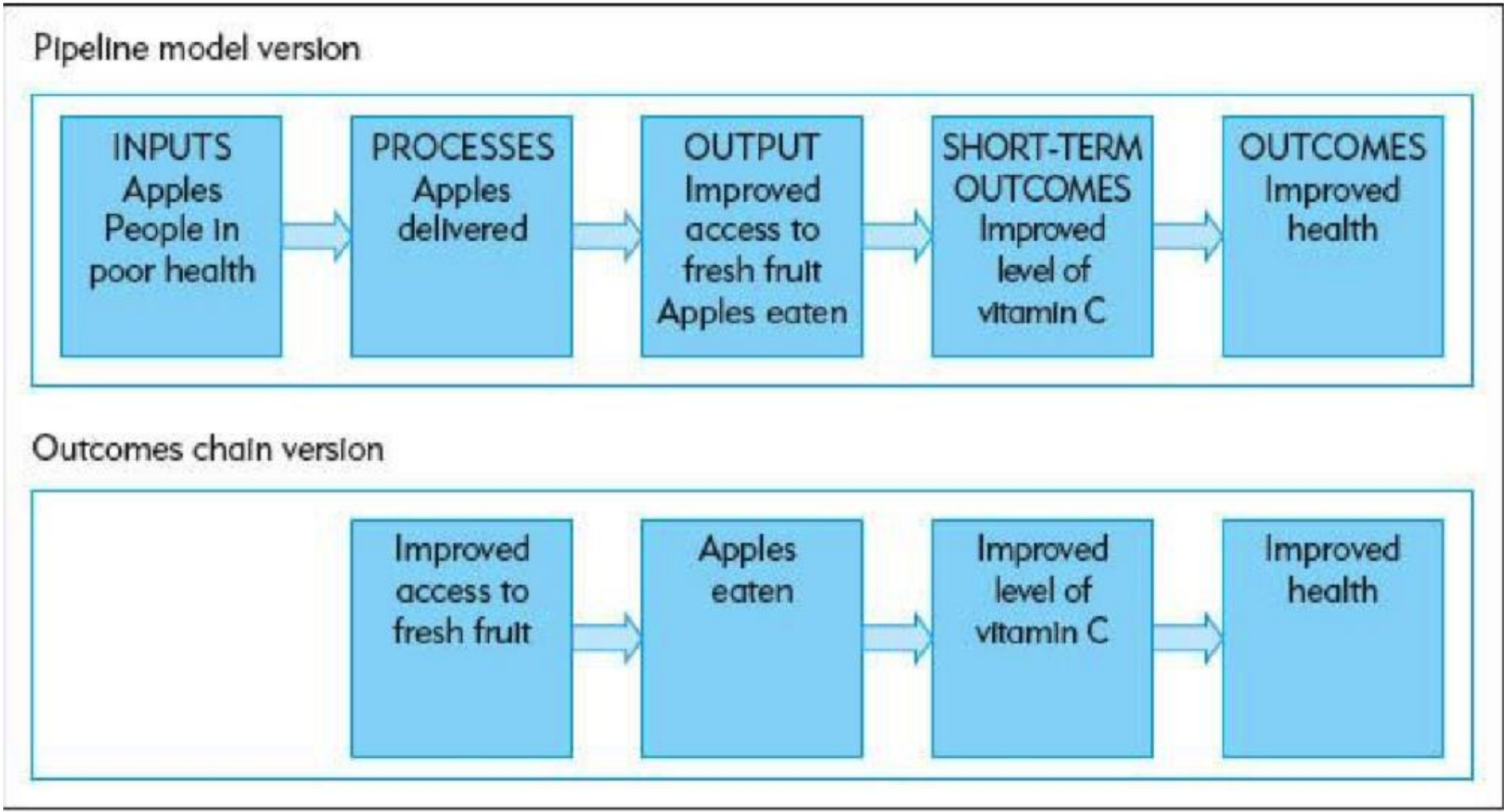
A policy can fail also because of problems in the implementation phase

Typically because the policy makers do not have enough resources (mostly knowledge, skills, information, sometimes money)

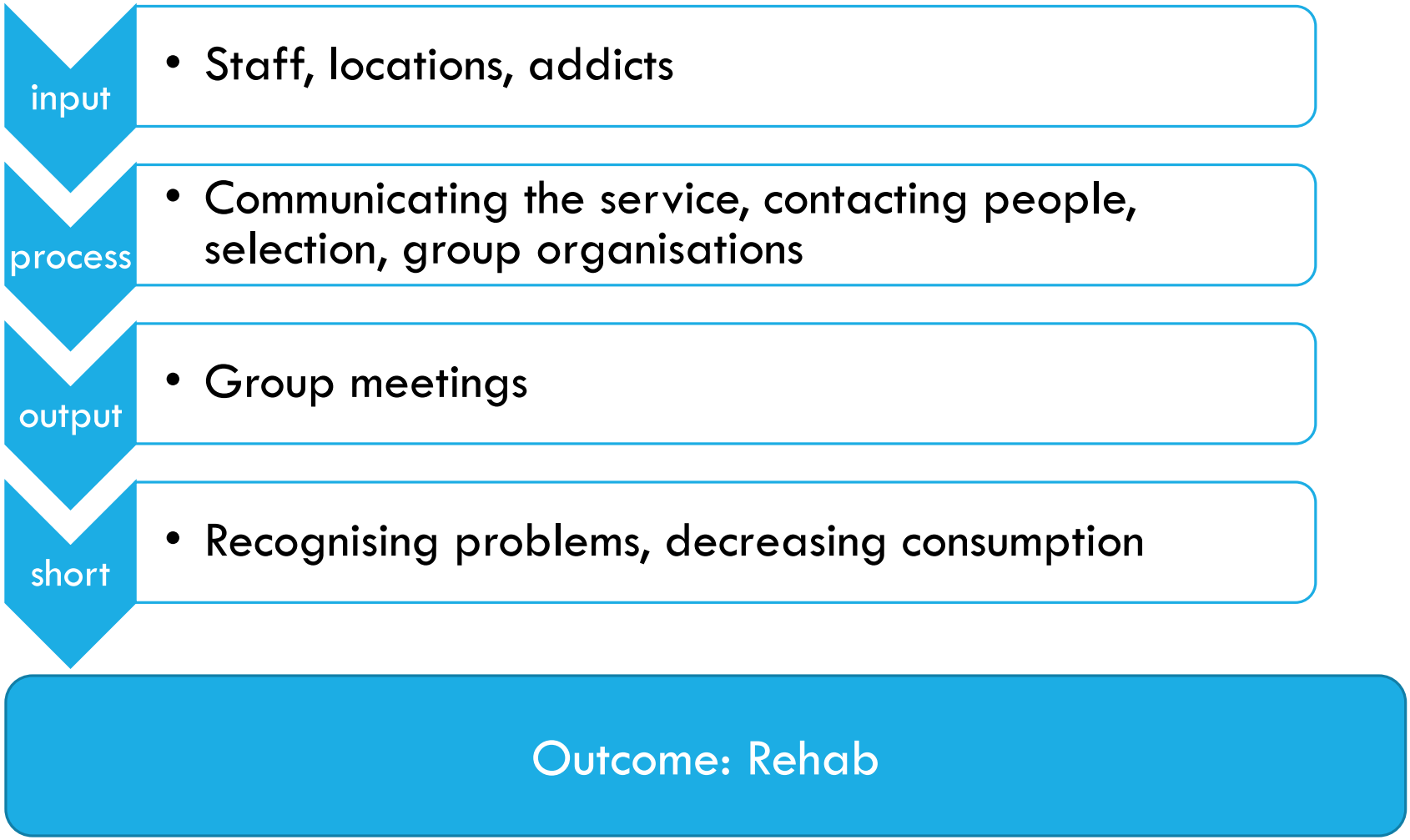
and/or

Because they do not co-operate

ONE APPLE A DAY: HOW IT WORKS (FUNNELL & ROGERS 2011)



LOGIC DIAGRAM FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING AGAINST DRUGS



EVALUATION: THE LOGIC CYCLE

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

Evaluation is the production of information in order to make judgements about:

- Relevance
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Utility

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

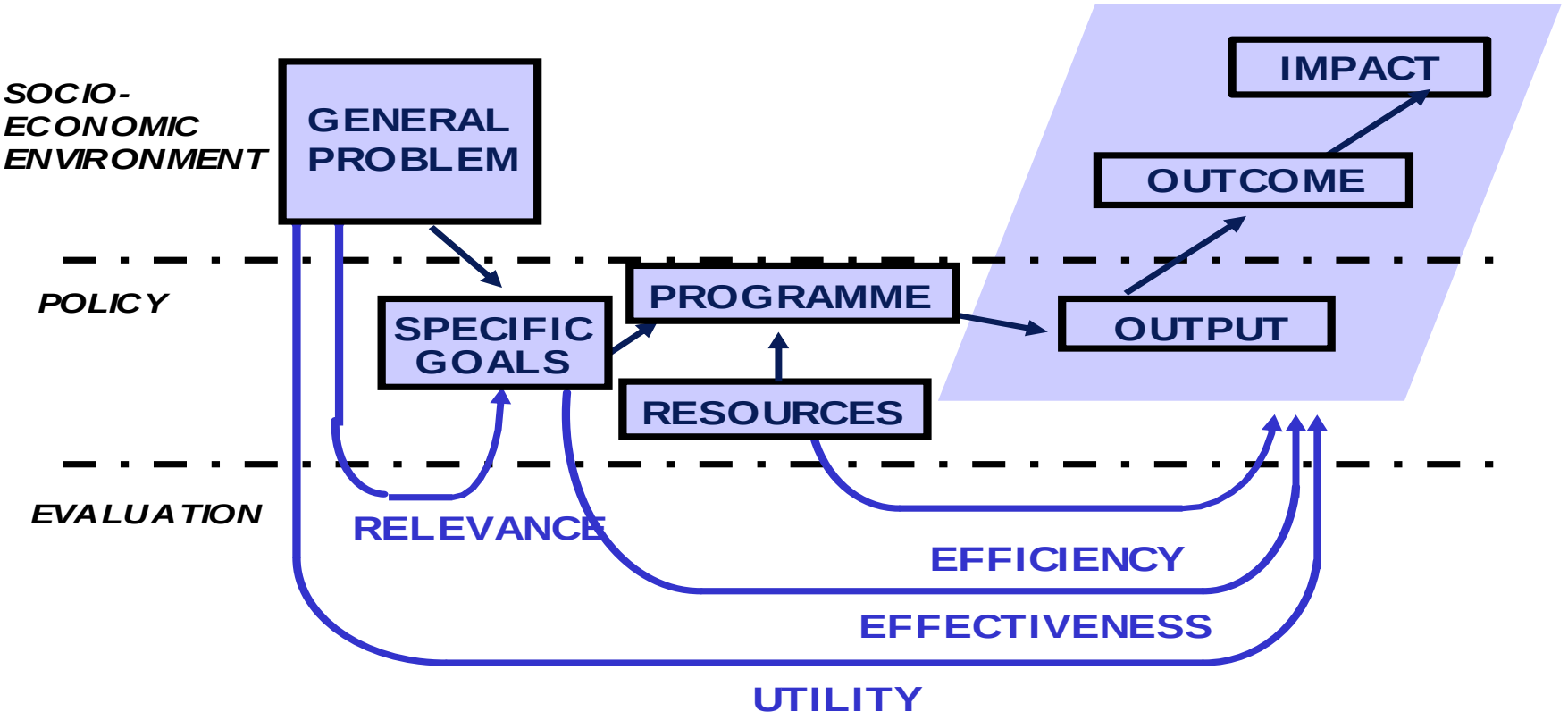
Relevance is the relationship between the general problem and the specific goals

Efficiency is the relationship between resources (input) and products (output)

Effectiveness is the relationship between the specific goals and the results (impact and outcome)

Utility is the relationship between the general problem and the results

POLICY EVALUATION



EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Relevance (problem-goals): To what extent are the programme objectives justified in relation to needs?

Efficiency (input-products): Have the objectives been achieved at the lowest cost?

Effectiveness (goals-results): To what extent have the objectives been achieved? Have the interventions and instruments used produced the expected effects?

Utility (results-problem): Are the expected or unexpected effects globally satisfactory from the point of view of direct or indirect beneficiaries?

CAUSALITY AND ITS PROBLEMS

CAUSAL LINKS AND CAUSAL EFFECTS

In order to express these judgements it is necessary to identify a **causal link**: a hypothesis that the measured effect is actually the result of the policy.

In other words, in order to evaluate we need to be reasonably certain that the phenomenon we have measured would not have happened without the policy itself.

EXAMPLE:
AIR POLLUTION POLICY

In 1970 the pollution of air in Milano was very high

In 1972 a new policy was introduced

In 1976 the level of pollution was considerably lower

But….the oil shock of 1973/74 is the main responsible for this improvement….

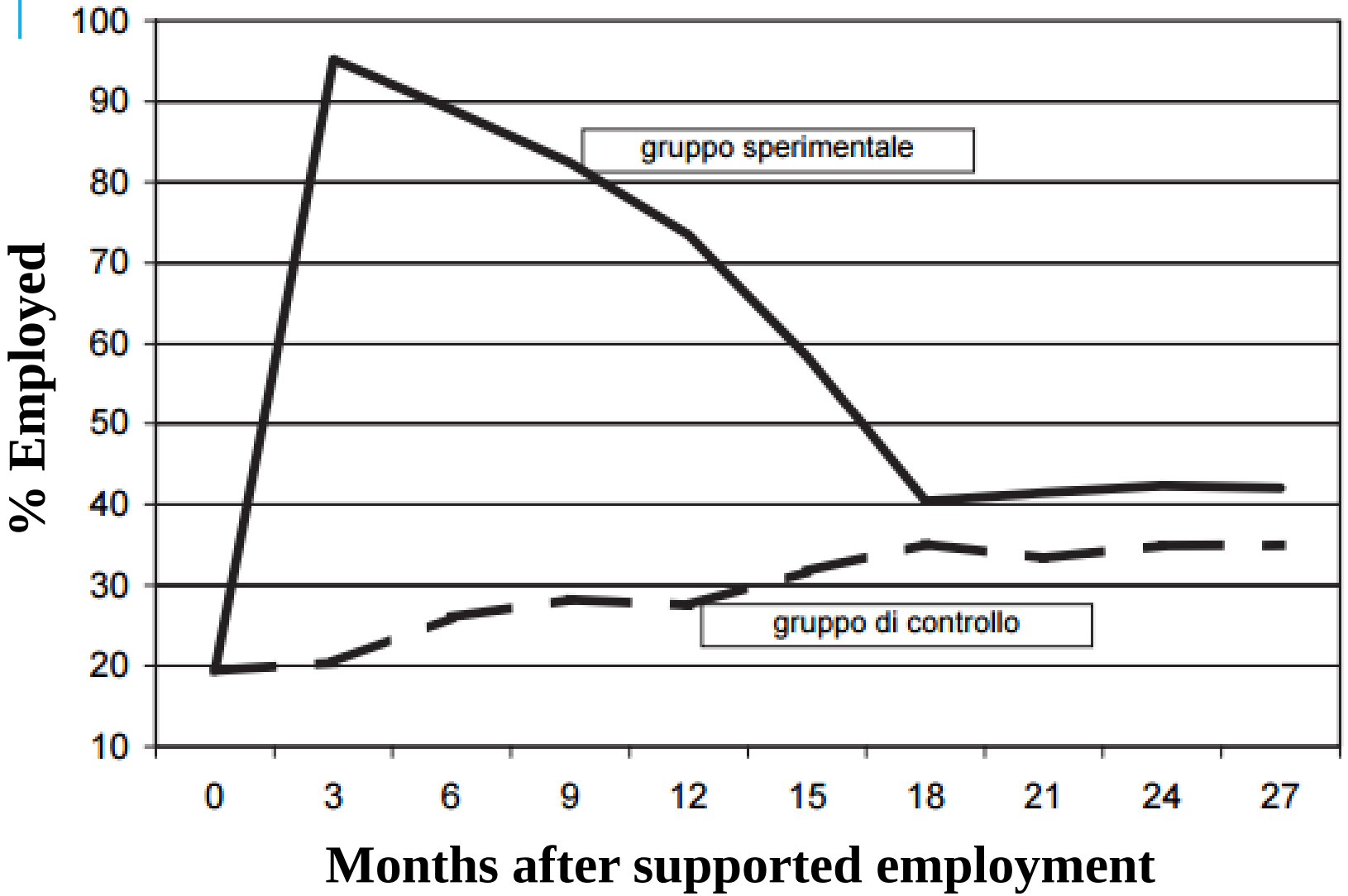
EXAMPLE:
DAY-CARE CENTRES FOR CHILDREN

In the 1970s the Lombardy Region financed the construction of 500 day-care centres in order to cover 6.6% of the need

In 1982 only 236 structures were operating but this covers the 8.4% of the need (and collects only the 6.4% of the children)

The reason is a very sharp fall in natality

SUPPORTED WORK FOR WOMEN



NEVER USE SIMPLE POST HOC PROPTER HOC LOGIC!

Many factors are at work that can interfere with the change in the problem.

This applies mostly to the effects in terms of outcome (i.e., solution of the problem)

THREE MEASURES OF RESULTS: OUTPUT, OUTCOMES, IMPACT

OUTPUT

The product of a policy

The direct result of the activity of the implementors

Example: the number of inspections for environmental controls

Find the outputs for: the CCTVs car park, 'One apple a day', Megan's Law

IMPACT

The transformation of the problem, i.e. the change in the need or in the demand

Example: the change in the concentration of pollutants in the air

Find the impacts for: the CCTVs car park, 'One apple a day', Megan's Law

SOME MEASURMENT PROBLEMS

In the case of outputs, identifying the causal link is easy, but hardly answers if the activity was really useful

Example: there were a lot of inspections but no results in terms of air quality or vice-versa

On the other hand measuring the impact is often difficult and sometimes the causal link is doubtful

Example: the effects are only long term or the problem can change for exogenous factors

OUTCOME

The outcome is the change of behaviour by target groups

Example: the decision to change the production process by firms

Find the outcomes for: the CCTVs car park, 'One apple a day', Megan's Law