

A large version of the EDU EVAL logo, featuring a green square with a white checkmark on the left, and the text 'EDU EVAL' in large green letters on the right. Below this, the text 'EVALUATION FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION STAFF' is written in a smaller, bold, green font.

**EDU  
EVAL**

**EVALUATION FOR THE PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION STAFF**

**Guidelines for the  
Professional  
Development of  
Adult Education  
Staff**



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## ETHICAL ATTITUDES

### Integrity and Congruence

Moral identity and integrity are a fundamental part of the individual identity. Integrity can be defined as the internal systems of principles that define and guide a person's behaviour. Congruence is the capacity of a person to behave abiding by that set of principles. Reflecting on the moral and ethical principles that guide their actions is a critical activity for evaluators, because it implies moral decision-making and congruent behaviour. From this point of view, we can consider integrity and congruence as two essential moral factors which have to be part of the moral identity of evaluators who have the responsibility of periodically examining whether their conduct is consistent with the beliefs they proclaim to themselves and to others and to tackle any incongruities between their beliefs and their behaviour. Developing clear self-insight and how others perceive them is fundamental for establishing effective relationships, based on trust, which underlie a good and constructive evaluation process.

### Respect and responsibility

Respect and responsibility in evaluation are connected with the capacity of recognizing and respecting the beliefs or practices of others. An evaluator must not discriminate against personal opinions or beliefs. Being aware of any personal prejudices is a responsibility for evaluators who should always question themselves before expressing their judgement. This could contribute to the construction of a permissive attitude, leading to fairer, more objective and more inclusive behaviour towards others.

### Emotional balance and self-awareness

This is the ability to "adjust" one's emotions by selecting and modulating the cognitive interpretation of events and their responses. It is a skill that an evaluator must develop to make their own assessment as free as possible from prejudices, personal experiences, and preconceived images of the person or persons being evaluated. Awareness and knowledge of one's emotions is a fundamental requirement of the person practising the profession of evaluator; this balance can be stabilized through training, supervision and self-listening processes aimed at developing a person's ability to think about

emotions, developing, over time, a full awareness of their mental states and the ability to observe the object accurately, while exploring their own responsibility in the act of evaluation.

### **Be open-minded**

As evaluation is a complex task, it is necessary to be able to respond to this complexity with flexibility and with the capability to bear in mind the multi-levels presented in the evaluation process. The evaluator has to be able to adapt the evaluation process to the contextual characteristics of the specific evaluation, which is about to be developed. This means being able to take into consideration: the professional history of the professionals involved and of the institution; the social and political framework in which the evaluation process is to take place; the evaluation models and the models of adult education, which are directly and indirectly present in the situation. In this sense, it is necessary for the evaluator to remain "open-minded" during the whole evaluation process.

### **Social Consciousness**

Any evaluation should have regard for human diversity and it must not discriminate against all those who are at a risk of social discrimination. Evaluators must not show any bias towards gender identity, minorities, socially exposed or disadvantaged groups.

An evaluator with an awakened social consciousness explores alternatives to the dominant cultural viewpoint and facilitates operations of inclusion and tolerance. Inclusion means recognizing and giving value to each person's distinctive characteristics. To create an inclusive environment means organizing a situation where everyone has the chance to make his/her point and to make his/her contribution in a democratic way.

Evaluation in adult education services has to focus on actions, behaviour and performance rather than on the judging the individual subject.

## PROFESSIONAL ETHICS: principles and advice

### Knowing the evaluation cultural framework

Evaluators' awareness includes both personal and professional dimensions. Evaluators have to be aware and competent in using different methods, tools and devices for both evaluation and self-assessment processes. They have to explain and prove their choices in terms of methodologies, markers and criteria adopted in order to evaluate all education-related products. They also have to be aware of their role within their personal experience (values, motivations, ethical values, experience, competence, beliefs) when making evaluations.

### Transparency

A transparent evaluation is based on implementing the democratic principle of respect for the person evaluated, using impartial judgment, respecting the privacy and ensuring the effectiveness of the assessment by the evaluator. Clearly set out criteria of the valuation, methods and objectives are the key points of a transparent evaluation. Respect for the person being evaluated is developed by defining what is evaluated (such as actions and processes) and how the evaluation is carried out (tools, methods of verification, time etc.), and also by exercising active listening, oriented to an empathic ability to understand the other person's point of view. By following this method of operation, the evaluator can avoid judgments which can make the evaluation process non-transparent.

### Respect of privacy

Considerations on privacy during evaluation include informed consent, in which the person participating in the evaluation is fully informed about the evaluation being conducted and how it is being conducted. This formal agreement should also include a commitment not to disclose personal information and to disseminate data only to those involved in the evaluation process.

Other essential elements of the privacy agreement of the evaluation are: voluntary participation, the precaution of not causing harm or unease in any way for the participants and keeping the identity of the participant unknown when possible.

## COMPETENCES AND SKILLS

### Supervising the whole evaluation process

For the evaluator it is very important to supervise the whole evaluation process from before it starts, while it is in progress and until its conclusion. This means: firstly, designing and organising the evaluation process on the basis of both the aims that will be reached and the specificity of the situation, the educator's group, the evaluation objects, etc.; secondly, arranging strategies and instruments for each step of the evaluation process; thirdly, checking that the evaluation process is coherent step by step; fourthly, modifying the strategies and the instruments on the bases of the feedback from people who have taken part in the evaluation process.

### Providing clear indicators

Selected indicators should always answer the evaluation questions. Their main function is to help the evaluator determine whether or not the program objectives have been achieved.

The best indicators are those that are relevant, easy to understand, observable, reliable and measurable in relation to the object and task of the evaluation. They should also include baseline data for inputs and outcomes in order to be able to measure progress and change between different evaluation sessions.

Indicators, as codified procedures, should always be included in the evaluation process to avoid or minimise the subjective influence of the evaluator and guarantee the transparency and the validity of the evaluation process for third parties. Their use and sharing with the evaluation receivers makes the whole evaluation process more effective and inspired by knowledge and desired development.

### Creating Trust

The building up of trust is a fundamental process thanks to which the act of evaluation is effective and oriented to improving the educational practices of the staff. Trust is made up of both a rational component and an irrational element that often guides our actions. It represents a fundamental link between the past, present and future that leverages on past experiences to build the future. Trust in interpersonal or group relationships generates value: creating confidence in a team is an investment that promotes a transparent evaluation, because it lowers the threshold of uncertainty and unconscious

defences. Building up confidence is based on clear communication processes and balanced responses where there is consistency between the verbal and nonverbal messages. Trust helps the evaluation highlight the criticism of work practices.

Trust is a major part in establishing successful interpersonal relationships. If your interpersonal relationships are plagued by suspicion and fear, making a commitment to building trust rather than destroying it with cynicism can help you better connect with everyone at any level of the evaluation. Trust demands you be reliable, honest, open, and show your integrity.

### Reading explicit and implicit dynamics

Every evaluation activity operates simultaneously at two different levels: the first level is manifest, the second level is hidden. This means that evaluators must pay careful attention to the explicit and implicit dynamics because otherwise they are not in control of the complicated process of evaluation. Evaluation is a very complex experience both for evaluators and for those being evaluated and judged. Fear of being badly judged, anxiety over the consequences of evaluation, memories of childhood experience with parents and teachers, distrust of the fairness and correctness of the evaluators and feelings of humiliation for not being up to the high performance required, can lead those evaluated to hide some important aspects or to try to present themselves in a way that does not correspond to reality. In the meantime, evaluators can be influenced by personal reasons or preferences, or they may unconsciously judge in a biased way, looking at the situation to be evaluated only from their personal theoretical and methodological approach, without being aware of what they are doing.

### Providing effective feedback

Feedback is central to supporting cognitive, technical and professional development. Yet it is complicated, for both the evaluator and for the receiver.

Effective feedback may be defined as feedback in which information about previous performance is used to promote positive and desirable development. This can be challenging as the evaluator must acknowledge the needs of the recipient while ensuring that feedback is both honest and accurate, elaborative and response-specific, facilitative rather than directive. Only if structured in this way can feedback be effective and enhance learning and development in the adult education service. One of the first duties of the evaluator is to go over the complexity of the task and learn a strategy to communicate in the best and most functional way, linked to the specific context and persons.



## POLITICAL AND SOCIAL AIMS

### Taking into account the complexity of evaluation

If we define adult education as any activity that is concerned with learning by adults, then the evaluation of adult education appears in all its intrinsic complexity. As a result, the adult education evaluation process must be theoretically grounded and supported by proven methodologies, which should be appropriate to the various specific sectors.

### Reading the context

The evaluation process is situated in a broad context. This means that the evaluator has to be aware: first, of both the limits and the possibilities of the institution in which they make evaluations (organization, rules, administrative procedures, etc.); second, of the political decisions about the educational service; third, of local conditions that influence the service under analysis (social and economic crisis or affluence; historical emergency; employment situation; people's educational or social needs, etc.). The evaluation of adult educators implies the study not only of the models of evaluation, but, above all, the contextualisation of the process as well, since the field of application covers a very differentiated spectrum of teaching/learning activities and related competencies, depending on the purpose, situation, content, modality, type of learner, and so on.

### Promoting organisational and professional well-being

Evaluation is a formative process that has positive effects on the quality of work. It can be considered a resource to promote the well-being of the people to be evaluated, especially when self-evaluation procedures are carried out, thus identifying and enhancing internal dynamics and problems within a team (e.g. problems in decentralisation, in endorsing other people's viewpoints, in understanding organisational roles and in managing leadership roles), but also the choices adopted, the tools used, the degree of sharing activities and the autonomy within an organisation.

## Taking external environments into account

The process of evaluations involves not only those evaluated in the individual service, but also external stakeholders and people that are connected to the service at various levels. Evaluators should then take all those elements into consideration and adapt their work in relation to the external environments. Clear evaluation tools, reports and results should also be widely disseminated, so that all those involved in the process can understand them; in this way the evaluation processes are clear as they represent and provide documentary evidence of the events within the evaluated environment. Clear communication is necessary in order to foster evaluation oriented to increasing knowledge and development. For these reasons, the criteria and aims of the evaluation must be open and shared by all those involved in the evaluation process.

## RISKS TO BE MANAGED

### Unclear roles

In an evaluation process, the roles of the figures involved have to be well defined. An adult education evaluation process effectively engages multifarious objectives, such as obtaining feedback about the quality of an educational programme, receiving information for planning educational activities, and assessing the merits and detriments of learners and educators.

### Misunderstandings

The act of evaluation always implies the ability to put ourselves in a relationship. This relationship has at least three aspects: the first with the subject we have to evaluate, the second with their work and its context, and the third with ourselves. None of these relationships is easy to build up and govern. However, being aware of one's own mode of communication can help the evaluator in their job. Indeed, even if episodes of poor communication cannot always be avoided, the evaluator can be helped by: 1. being aware of the meanings of the words used; 2. being able to choose them carefully; 3. being aware of the sound and tone of voice while speaking. The gestures and facial expressions of the evaluator while speaking and listening to others helps create a deeper contact with the person they are speaking or listening to, in order to understand them better and find the best way to give feedback, whether positive or negative.

### Personal background effect

Evaluation is not a "neutral" process: it is a relationship between the evaluator and the evaluated person, even though it is mediated by procedures and structured protocols. Moreover, for the person evaluated, evaluation can be an opportunity to better understand how they have worked, their weak points and the resources in their approach to the working situation. In this sense, the evaluation relationship will be part of the learning history of the evaluated person and of the evaluator's history (because through this relationship, the evaluator can also gain better understanding of how they have done their work of evaluation).

## Manipulation

Manipulation in evaluation is a thorny topic and by no means a trivial one. Literally, it is the art of controlling people without them consciously being aware of it.

As evaluation is always associated with power and with the possibility of taking decisions that are always going to influence others people's lives, the risk of manipulation is always around the corner. In order to avoid episodes of manipulation (which may even be unintended or completely unconscious) evaluators must always pay very great attention to their verbal and non-verbal language and always give effective and very clear feedback to the evaluated person.