



EVALUATION IN ADULT EDUCATION – CONCEPT, PURPOSES, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

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Abstract:

Continuous and thorough evaluation is the element that is most frequently highly considered in adult-education courses. A systematic program of evaluation can provide considerable useful information to both the instructor and the learner in order to improve the learning and instructional process. Restricting evaluation to content tests or measures of participant satisfaction overlooks some of the most important sources of information. The instructor should continually look for new and better ways of finding out how much his adult students are learning from the instruction he gives. Instruction can then be adjusted to bring about the maximum amount of learning possible in the limited amount of time that the adult student can commit to an educational activity (Dickinson, 1993, p. 102). This paper discusses the importance and significance of evaluation in adult education programs.

Keywords: evaluation, adult education, purposes, methods

1. Introduction

1.1 Research questions

- 1) What is the evaluation?
- 2) What are the purposes of evaluation?
- 3) What are the methods of evaluation?
- 4) Why evaluation is neglected?

1.2 What is evaluation

The ability to design, conduct, interpret, and utilize evaluation is an important skill for strategic planning and effective leadership. evaluations can be designed for making better decisions related to continuing education programing. (Simerly, 1987, p. 168). Jones (1986) stated that Stephen Brookfield published an article called 'Evaluation

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models in adult education'; in this paper he presented an overview of various models for educational evaluation and made comparisons between evaluation as practised in the UK and the USA. This was instructive but what was more revealing was the implicit assumption that different approaches to evaluative work were informed by different value systems (Jones, 1986).

Evaluation is a process of assessing the extent to which some activity has succeeded in we intended it to do. it is a vital step in the rational management of all social enterprise. (Miller, 1964, p. 294).

Educators use the term evaluation to identify the process of determining the strength or value of their work. It is a way of measuring the results of educational activities (Morgan, 1976, p. 217). Evaluation is the act of examining and judging, concerning the worth, quality, significance, amount, degrees, or condition of something. In short, evaluation is the ascertainment of merit (Brookfield, 1986, p. 264).

The definition of program evaluation encompasses only a limited number of the evaluative judgments that can be made about the program it is primarily concerned with assessing the ends which were attained and is not directly concerned with assessments about other aspects of the program such as the means used to attain objectives. Seen in this light, effective evaluation requires:

- 1) clear, concise objectives or statements of intended educational ends to be attained,
- 2) benchmark or pre-program measures of the behavior(s) or behavioral patterns of the learner prior to this exposure to the educational program, and
- 3) measures of the behavior(s) or behavioral patterns of the learner after completion of the educational program. These requirements allow the educator to evaluate this program- that is, assess the extent to which the desired educational ends have been attained (Boyle, 1976, p. 70).

Some researchers say that "*program planning and evaluation go hand in hand*". The offerings in established community education programs and other adult learning center, should be evaluated regularly. Whether the administrators and teachers believe that everything is fine, or, preferably that "*there is always room for improvement*", program evaluation is essential. efforts should be made to determine whether a master plan with a consistent framework is in place or whether the program is a smattering of offerings that have grown tops- truly simply because funds were available and teachers could be found who were willing to try their hand at an adult education course. The purpose of the evaluation is not to pinpoint blame for problems but to lead to planning for a more effective program. One of the marks of good adult literacy program is that it is under constant planning evaluation, and change (Soifer, 1990, p. 157-1.58)

2. Purposes of Evaluation

Within education, curiosity and engagement are important, and essential to academic success. How to create those traits within an educational environment becomes an issue of great debate. Mainstream educational institutions seem to rely on the use of rewards

and/or incentives as a way to enhance student performance and motivation (Riley and English, 2016).

In adult education, the evaluation is relatively complex process which may start with assessing changes in individuals or with determining the effectiveness of the total program. The major reason for evaluation is the improvement of program. The results of evaluation can be fed back continuously to stimulate and guide further improvement. By seeing what has been done and what is yet to be done, we gain insight into the factors necessary to help adults achieve the goals they desire. By taking a critical look, we can see deficiencies in method. We can discover unmet needs. we can review our goals and set more specific objectives for the immediate future we may find a need for more facts, more research, more thinking. out of such activity comes growth and improvement of program (Thatcher, 1963, p. 175).

Knox stated that the specific purposes of program evaluation are:

- 1) to make more explicit the rationale for the educational program as a basis for deciding which aspects of the educational program are most important to evaluate regarding effectiveness and what specific types of data to collect.
- 2) to collect evidence or data pond which to base the judgments regarding effectiveness.
- 3) to analyze the data and draw conclusions.
- 4) to make judgments or decisions which are based at least in part on the data.
- 5) to implement the decisions so as to improve the educational program. (Knox, 1969, p. 370)

Program evaluation, the process of determining the value of a program, is considered an essential part of the educational process by tradition and by experts. It should be something that you want to do-not something that you are forced to do by tradition or by administrative assignment. for evaluation to attain its greatest value, we must be very clear in terms of what we are doing and why we are doing it. we must be able to distinguish our goal and purposes from the Coles that we are expecting evaluation to full fill and the values that we expect to attain from it (Boyle, 1981, p. 230).

No evaluation would be complete if it did not relate individual needs to community or notional needs. It therefore helps to keep programs abreast of a rapidly changing environment requiring new skills, new understandings, new approaches. It serves also to keep adult programs from becoming inbred and unrelated to the larger goals of all public education. evaluation can provide the administrator and his staff with a sense of purpose and a feeling of accomplishment. Morale is improved and professional growth encouraged. All people respond with more effort when their previous effort is recognized as worthy and fruitful and they accept suggestions for improvement much more readily. Evaluation should reveal the good as well as the bad. recognition of the good will make more acceptable reference to the bad (Thatcher, 1963, p. 176).

Some writers summarized the major purposes of evaluation as follows:

- 1) to determine how near the individual student, and the class as a whole, come to reaching the goal that they set out to attain.

- 2) to measure the rate of progress that the students are making at any given time in the course.
- 3) to determine the effectiveness of specific teaching materials, methods and activities.
- 4) to provide information which will be useful to the student the instructor, and the public (Morgan, 1976, p. 219).

3. Method of evaluation

Adult education and training have undergone fundamental reform in recent decades. First, the conceptual framework underpinning theories of adult education and training has become deeply contested. In terms of curricular structure, the traditional focus on behavioral outcomes has been replaced by the broader concept of competences. Equally, increased demands for value for money in public services have resulted in questions of accountability and quality moving to the fore. Evaluation has also progressed dramatically and is now no longer simply concerned primarily with measurable outcomes but with process, stakeholder roles, values, and quality (Mcnamara, et al, 2010).

Almost all evaluation methods are designed to compare outcomes of a given program with one or more external criteria of effectiveness. The criteria, and therefore the method, will vary with type of program to be evaluated. Some methods will yield objective data and other methods will rely on subjective. The choice of methods depends on the desired balance between the total cost of the method weighed against the value of the information the method will produce (Strother & Klus, 1982, p. 136).

The different kinds of evaluation may be classified according to the degree of their formality and precision. This division is usually made on these three levels: Informant evaluation, semi-formal evaluation, and formal evaluation or scientific research.

Morgan, Holms, and Bundy explain the three levels as follows:

A. Informal Evaluation

The everyday sizing-up of one's work is informal evaluation. All adult educators do some of this sizing-up, even though they may not refer to it as evaluation. Informal evaluation is less precise and less reliable than either of the other two classes, but it is useful in many teaching situations and one can greatly improve his ability to evaluate informally through study and practice. Some of the resources of information for informal evaluation are:

- observation of the work done by the learners each time the group meets,
- giving informal tests,
- talking to the learners outside of scheduled meetings, noting the changes in the learners' practices in their homes, in their places of work and in their community, and
- conferring with other instructors and supervisors.

B. Semi-formal evaluation

This is a more systematic and reliable type of evaluation than the informal type. It is the kind that the average teacher of adults will use in determining the quality of his teaching and the achievement of his students. Much of the evidence in semiformal evaluation comes from these sources: reliable and valid tests, surveys to determine changes in practices, objective scales and rating sheets, and the judgments of experts.

C. Formal evaluation or research

Formal evaluation is a type of scientific research in which all of the pertinent facts are gathered, and the variables controlled by means of statistical procedures. This kind of evaluation usually requires considerable time and much training in the methods of research. It should not be undertaken by the average teacher without the council of a specialist in the field of educational research. With the aid of a specialist, however, the average teacher of adults can do some excellent research work and should be encouraged to do it.

Information collected from an evaluation is also a basis for assessing the effectiveness of instruction. The purpose of instruction is to facilitate learning, and the purpose of evaluation is to determine the extent of learning. The quality of instruction is determined to a great extent by the result obtained from evaluations. Evaluation may also be used in making decisions about the practicality of a course or program. It can document the need for the content being taught. If a reassessment indicates that adults already have the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes desired, instruction is not necessary. In this sense evaluation is an indication of adult readiness for learning new things (Verduin, 1977, p. 154).

The result from evaluation may also be used for placement of adults with prospective employers, for diagnosing more advanced learning needs, and for vocational and career decision making. This information aids counselors in helping adults to make rational decisions regarding vocational aspirations and also aids employers in selecting personnel. Evaluation is a source for enhancing adult motivation. Success generates a sense of achievement and develops an adult's confidence in learning. The desire for further and more advanced learning is reinforced. If evaluations indicate that an adult is not progressing as well as expected, remedial work can be assigned and instructional techniques revised, so that an adult will not become discouraged with his lack of progress (Verduin, 1977, p. 155).

Since evaluation is an integral part of the total program, it must be planned for during the early stages of problem definition and goal statement. For good staff development work to be consistent, both the means and ends of the work must be evaluated. A critical look at the desired behavioral changes as well as the worth of the program change itself can provide some indication of the total effect of program development work. The behavioral change in adult educators as well as the behavioral change in adult students affected by the program change are of prime concern in this evaluation. If this is a worthwhile staff development activity the staff must grow too (Miller & Verduin, 1979 p. 43).

Knox provided the following suggestions for conducting an evaluation that can contribute to its soundness and to its fit into the ongoing educational program:

- strive for fairness, objectivity and credibility even as you acknowledge that evaluation is a combination of objective descriptions and subjective judgments.
- explain evaluation plan and procedures to people likely to be affected by them.
- provide clear instructions with all data- collection instruments and procedures.
- recognize that evaluation can be disruptive, so be as organized and unobtrusive as possible and minimise disruptions.
- as a part of the evaluation process, try to develop commitment to use of findings.
- use pretesting and pilot projects to refine instruments and procedures.
- look for strengths as well as weaknesses.
- be alert to unexpected assumptions, influences, viewpoints, and consequences.
- provide feedback from evaluation findings.
- help participants learn how to use evaluation procedures as part of their own learning activities.
- in reporting evaluation findings, indicate implications and alternative courses of action.
- anticipate consequences of plans, activities and recommendations.
- be willing to do additional analysis.
- express appreciation to those who cooperate with or contribute to the evaluation effort (Knox, 1986, p. 185).

4. Why evaluation is neglected

"...many adult educators fail to evaluate their programs. Among the reasons that have been advanced are that they may have nothing to evaluate. In these instances, it is likely that no ends or objectives have been identified for the program other than to implement some techniques, use some device, or cover some given area of subject matter. A second reason advanced is that the program objectives or often too intangible to evaluate. The stated objectives may be so broad that they are impossible to operationalize in behavioral terms, or they may be so vague that almost anything could be construed as relevant to their attainment. A third reason that evaluation is neglected has to do with administrative lethargy. Evaluation- sound evaluation- task work. Time and effort are required to adequately plan evaluation procedures early in the program and to implement such procedures whenever necessary. frequently the educator-both the administrator and the instructor- feels that time is too valuable to waste on evaluation. Even where there is a desire on the part of the instructional staff to evaluate accomplishments, demands for the performance of other activities often take precedence over those directed toward evaluation. Finally, there is the possibility that a program will be criticized if people discover how negligible are the results. It would appear that this is exactly the intent of evaluation-to either improve programs or to weed out the less effective programs. Yet the educator may be so insecure that he doesn't want to know how well he is doing. Those educators who are genuinely concerned with quality can upgrade their efforts by

recognizing the program evaluation is inextricably interlined with the planning and implementation of the education program. A limited increase in attention to evaluation during the planning and implementation of the program will materially improve results." (Boyle, 1970, p. 72-73)

5. Symptoms of inadequate evaluation

There are a variety of symptoms that might indicate that the evaluation procedures might be inadequate. Alan Knox listed some typical symptoms for inadequate evaluation and said that "*Although any one symptom may result from other causes, the occurrence of several symptoms together should be recognized by the director as evidence that there are major discrepancies between goals, resources, and procedures that are not being accommodated*".

Some typical symptoms are as follows:

- slow increase in the number of adults enrolled, compared with similar programs.
- difficulty in attracting adults from a specified target population.
- high dropout rate associated with an incompatibility between learning style and teaching style.
- low rate of learner persistence from year to year.
- limited learner directedness regarding planning, conducting, and assessing of his own educational efforts.
- many complaints by learners to teachers regarding a discrepancy among goals, resources, procedures, and learner background.
- unwillingness of the most qualified teachers to accept teaching positions in the division or to continue for another term.
- slow improvement of beginning teachers in the division.
- difficulty in placing in jobs or further education those participants who successfully complete a course of study in the division.
- frequent complaints from employers regarding the obsolescence of the knowledge and skills that their employees have obtained from courses in the division or the ability of the employees to apply what they have learned.
- few courses sequences.
- lack of articulation between courses that are presumably part of a sequence.
- high incidence of friction in education with the youth preparatory education programs of the institution.
- lack of support from policy makers regarding budget requests and proposals for new programs (Knox, 1969, p. 371).

6. Conclusion

Evaluation is one of four indispensable steps in the development of an educational program of any type. These steps are:

- determining the objective, formulating a plan of action,

- carrying out the plan, and
- evaluating the results.

The extent and content of students' knowledge, as well as their ability to think, learn, and communicate, affect their likelihood of becoming productive adults and active citizens. School success in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies contribute richness and depth to students' pursuits after high school, to their communities, and to the whole of society (Madigan, et al, 2016).

All persons and interests involved in the educational process should be involved as partners in evaluation as in each of the other steps. The basic theory of evaluation is simple one must know two things: the desired objective, and the present position in relation to the objective. A third reference point is often desirable: the position at some past time. By comparing the past position with the present position in relation to the objective, one can judge his progress and establish trends. Knowledge of these enables the evaluators to change their course, to do things differently and better, to reach the objective sooner and move efficiently (Theatcher, 1963, p. 177).

Evaluation should be an integral part of any plan for adult education. It should be applied to the planning of the program, to the execution of the program, and to the result (Morgan, 1976, p. 217).

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