

Debate 1

9 Keywords

- ✚ Value
- ✚ Systematic process
- ✚ Changes
- ✚ Objectives
- ✚ Measurement
- ✚ Qualitative and quantitative dimensions
- ✚ Comparison
- ✚ Trends
- ✚ The culture of evaluation

Conceptualization of the evaluation of impact

What is impact evaluation and what is it not?

Let us recall that the debate began by referring to some basic definitions:

- *From the RAE dictionary: **Evaluar** (Del fr. évaluer) : 1. tr. Señalar el valor de algo. 2. tr. Estimar, apreciar, calcular el valor de algo. U. t. c. prnl. 3. tr. Estimar los conocimientos, aptitudes y rendimiento de los alumnos. **Impacto**. (Del lat. tardío impactus) : 2. m. Huella o señal que deja. 5. m. Efecto producido en la opinión pública por un acontecimiento, una disposición de la autoridad, una noticia, una catástrofe, etc. [definitions of "evaluate" and "impact" quoted from the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy]*
- *The measurement of changes in the well-being of individuals, that may be attributed to a specific programme or policy. (World Bank, 2003)*
- *An assessment, as systematic and objective as possible of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. (OECD, 2010)*
- ✚ Andréa Barboza focuses on an analysis of the term evaluation and its evolution as from the sixties, when it began to be used in a wider sense: Currently, evaluation is not something exact and systemic. It must take into consideration social and economic aspects. In this line of thinking we should consider that impact evaluation in vocational training must analyse all the objectives of a programme, course or project, bearing in mind the benefits that essentially promote positive changes for people. Evaluation must

determine the extent to which these changes of behaviour are actually occurring. The whole evaluation process is a collection and combination of data related to performance, based on criteria which lead to comparative or numerical classification. When we evaluate we even need to think about unforeseen outcomes and their consequences. In addition, it must be taken into account that impact evaluation must be a continuous and systematic process and be well-planned.

Some complementary definitions:

- Scriven (1967) – Determine the merit or value of something. Scriven (1980 to 1991) – Determine the value, merit or quality.
- Talmagré (1982) – three objectives are essential in evaluation: 1) to make a value judgment of a programme, 2) to help those responsible for decision-making to define their policies, 3) to undertake a political function.
- Fetterman (1994) – proposes expanding the definition and the objective of evaluation to include the use of evaluation concepts and techniques in order to empower (to emancipate, to liberate or to clarify).
- From *SENAR Methodological Series* (volume 6, 2005), on the subject of evaluation: Evaluation is a systematic, continuous and comprehensive process, which attempts to determine to what extent the objectives previously determined have been reached. If the act of teaching and learning consists in the attempt to reach the anticipated objectives, evaluation also takes on guiding and cooperative features. Evaluation is initiated with the formulation of objectives and requires the development of means of obtaining evidence and interpreting outcomes, in order to learn to what extent these objectives have been achieved, and to make a value judgment. Thus, evaluation is the judgment arising from a comparative analysis of the results obtained and the pre-established standards. The evaluation process must be carried out with a view to the coherence between what was planned and what was executed, and the scope of the objective(s) of the action/activities/project/programme. To evaluate learning is to corroborate the changes and transformations which have taken place in the knowledge, ability and attitude of the participant, by means of comparisons between input and output profiles during and at the end of the teaching-learning process.

The evaluation process should be carried out at different moments; that is, at the beginning, during and at the end of the action/project/programme. It should be diagnostic and formative and provide a summary, according to what was addressed in the text (Fundação UOCRA).

Impact evaluation in vocational training can be understood as a systematic process of analysis of an activity, event or thing that allows us to understand, in a contextualized form, all of its dimensions and implications, with a view to promoting its improvement. Therefore, the concept of evaluation includes the analysis of processes and outputs or outcomes of an activity, event or thing. In this way, evaluation contemplates the activity to be evaluated in a global manner: its processes of formulation and development, the actions implemented or events which occurred, as well as the outcomes obtained,

historically and socially contextualized. It is not, therefore, merely a comparative examination of the proposed and obtained objectives.

✚ Jorge Castro underlined the fact that he considered the OECD's definition to be the most suited to vocational training and added: If we wish to be more specific, I would suggest the following definition: IMPACT EVALUATION is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed vocational training project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and outcomes. Naturally the object of impact evaluation will be to determine the relevance and the achievement of objectives of vocational training. With regard to the principal objectives of vocational training, they were identified at the Buenos Aires event as: to develop the employability of individuals; to support the improvement of the productivity and competitiveness of productive units, and increase the number of citizens capable of generating wealth for the improvement of the living conditions of society.

✚ Mario Miranda observed that: The definition proposed should address every point at which the impact of vocational training must be evaluated: before, during and after it has ended. It must also include both the economic perspective and other intangible outcomes which in themselves constitute an impact on vocational training (motivation, performance, etc.). It may be possible to draft a definition of impact evaluation for vocational training in the following way: VOCATIONAL TRAINING IMPACT EVALUATION is the process of measuring and evaluating the effect produced on individuals and organizations before, during and after the occurrence of actions and vocational training programmes aimed at improving their productive and/or service-based results, as well as their occupational performance, on the basis of indicators which reflect levels of satisfaction, learning, the application of lessons learnt and benefits acquired.

✚ Alejandro Waisglas brought a paper to the table (which will be placed in the technical documents section) and added: With regard to drafting a definition of vocational training, it may be possible to produce an answer if we visualize the evolution of the vocational training concept through the analysis of changes in international regulations on this matter. In 1939, the International Labour Organization, in its Recommendation 57 stated that: "the expression vocational training means any form of training by means of which technical or trade knowledge can be acquired or developed, whether the training is given at school or at the place of work." Subsequently, an evolution of the concept of vocational training took place, and it was no longer viewed as an end in itself, but a means or tool aimed not only at employment, but also at the development of broader capacities and aptitudes. In 1962, the International Labour Organization, in its Recommendation 117 stated that: "Training is not an end in itself, but a means of developing a person's occupational capacities, due account being taken of the employment opportunities, and of enabling him to use

his abilities to the greatest advantage of himself and the community; it should be designed to develop personality, particularly where young persons are concerned."

In 1975, the International Labour Conference adopted Recommendation 150, which included an even more ambitious concept of vocational training. While it considered that guidance and vocational training constitute a comprehensive group of actions, it linked them directly to the remaining forms of education. In this sense, vocational training was no longer aimed exclusively at production and labour, but at all of society, in the broadest terms: "For the purpose of this Recommendation, the qualification of the terms **guidance** and **training** by the term **vocational** means that guidance and training are directed to identifying and developing human capabilities for a productive and satisfying working life and, in conjunction with the different forms of education, to improve the ability of the individual to understand and, individually or collectively, to influence working conditions and the social environment." More recently, the ILO's International Labour Conference addressed the revision of international standards on vocational training and guidance. In its Resolution concerning Human Resources Training and Development, of June 2000, it stated, amongst other points, that: "The economy and society at large, like individuals and enterprises, benefit from human resources development and training." [...] "Human resources development and training also underpin the fundamental values of society – equity, justice, gender equality, non-discrimination, social responsibility, and participation." Today, vocational training is no longer viewed as a limited stage prior to active life, but, together with other forms of education, as part of an individual's permanent and lifelong training process.

- ✚ Irma Briasco referred again to the definition provided by Ernesto Abdala's *Manual de evaluación de impacto* (Impact Evaluation Manual), which is uploaded in the section on technical documents: *The term impact evaluation is understood to mean the process of evaluation aimed at measuring the outcomes of interventions, as regards quantity, quality and extension, according to pre-established standards. The measurement of outcomes, a main feature of impact evaluation, makes it possible to compare the level of fulfilment achieved to the desired level of fulfilment. It therefore compares planning to the outcome of the implementation. Impact evaluation covers all of the effects which are secondary to planning and implementation: specific and global; looked for (according to the objectives) or unlooked for; positive, negative or neutral; direct or indirect (launching the programme can itself generate effects on those directly involved, even on society as a whole). For decades, the prevailing idea was "evaluation is measuring", stressing only dimensions and quantitative indicators. At present, impact evaluation is acknowledged to be a broad and global process, in which qualitative techniques are added to the quantitative approach.*

✚ Liliana and Gustavo Vargas pointed out that in addition to the concepts mentioned, it was also necessary to consider both the public policy perspective and certain aspects regarding which it could be possible to agree on a common group of elements in order to enable a certain level of comparability of outcomes. For example: periods for the compilation of information, sample selection, methods to eliminate distortion, programmes which could be compared, etc.

✚ Daniel Kluppel Carrara added the following reflections regarding the importance of every process of a vocational training institution. According to the thinking of Thereza Penna Firme (Coordinator of the *Centro de Avaliação da Fundação Cesgranrio*)...

Without evaluation we have no way of adopting a critical stance in life. It constitutes one of the basic competencies in all levels of education. Evaluation is more than a technical process. In order to design evaluation, the following features should be borne in mind:

- * provide a guide for decision-making
- * be organized, legible and unambiguous
- * be contextualized
- * be technically reliable, and provide precise information in order to corroborate clearly the most significant outcomes.

We are not yet fully familiarized with the evaluation process; many perceive it as a form of criticizing or belittling professionals. However, this is not the objective; it is, rather, to improve their performance in the team and the institution even further. "Therefore, what is still lacking is a culture of mediation and evaluation."

A human being does not evolve out of silence, but out of dialogue and action.
Sandra Bozza

✚ Regina Torres made the following contributions: To the concept of impact evaluation found in Ernesto Abdala's Manual, I would like to add the points when impact evaluation is performed:

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| EX ANTE | Before the start of implementation – an evaluation is carried out of the socio-economic and institutional context, of problems identified, needs detected, the target population, input and action strategies. |
| INTRA | Performed during the implementation of the programme. The activities of the process are evaluated and the |

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| | successes, failures and difficulties are identified. |
| POST | Performed the moment the implementation of the project ends, detecting, recording and analysing outcomes. |
| EX POST | Performed some time (months or years) after the conclusion of implementation. This evaluates outcomes which have become consolidated over time. |

Impact evaluation is performed at the start (ante), at the end (post) and some time after the conclusion (ex post)

I wish to share a concern with the community: in the case of the evaluation of vocational training courses (courses with a heavier work load and which are associated with an occupation in the labour market), what type of study do we intend to develop? Impact studies, or cost-benefit studies? Leavers support studies or follow-up studies?

The following chart shows the research trends for the evaluation of vocational education.

The Evaluation of Vocational Education: Research trends

| Trends | Description |
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| 1. Support provided for leavers | <p>Basic objective: to subsidize planning and improve the quality of VT provided.</p> <p>Focus: customer satisfaction, performance in the labour market and socio-occupational development; a cost-benefit analysis is also possible.</p> <p>Methodology: comparison between leavers' and graduates' indicators, based on information and opinions obtained from the subjects (former students, employers), bearing in mind the parameters of the labour market and/or of similar studies.</p> <p>Frequency: generally regular and systematic, allowing for series of indicators.</p> |
| a) Follow-up studies | These studies compare the educational and occupational situation of leavers, generally 6 to 12 months after the end of the course. |
| b) Tracer studies | These provide details of the educational and occupational evolution of leavers over longer periods of between 3 and 10 years. |
| 2. Impact or cost-benefit studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Objective: To sponsor decisions on the success and possible continuity of a programme/project. ▪ Focus: Financial returns for the programme/project, measured in wage-income earnings generated for former students versus training costs (for families, businesses and/or society). ▪ Methodology: Quasi-experimental, comparing |

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| | <p>leavers' indicators with those of a previously established control group (similar to experiments carried out in laboratories, with guinea pigs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Frequency: generally specific, restricted to the project/programme to be evaluated. |
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SOURCE: GALLART, 2006; LEITE, 2003.