

Proposals for the Guide and focal points for future collaboration

We might consider that the main objective of the Guide should be to provide a **methodological framework** favouring the creation of an Impact Evaluation which, although it might not be homogeneous in all countries and Institutions, should at least **use similar parameters** defined by certain features of the training, of the agency carrying out the evaluation, etc.

Nonetheless, as has already been highlighted in some contributions to the Forum, impact evaluation – in its most commonly accepted dimension in the context of training assessment – may be more useful for improving programmes if a broader evaluation approach is included. This might enable us to design a kind of **framework guide for the Evaluation of Training** that also includes the conceptualisation of other levels or dimensions of the evaluation, possibly in consecutive stages.

This kind of approach would allow us to focus initial efforts in the development of impact evaluation since it is the level of evaluation that is less frequently applied to public policies and which therefore seems to require greater efforts to promote its implementation. As several participants have already pointed out, it is becoming increasingly important to know the effects of public policies and programmes and this gives impact evaluation an important place in the political agenda of all countries.

In order not to lose sight of other equally significant aspects we must consider this development as a specific and necessary element, but one that does not provide all the answers nor promote all the uses of evaluation. Thus, the inclusion of other dimensions (relevance, processes, resources, etc.) in the systematic approach to evaluation may help us understand the outcomes of impact evaluation and facilitate decision-making with respect to programmes, plans or training activities.

In this respect, some of the conclusions presented in the international literature on impact evaluation, such as the statement that “training programmes geared to the unemployed do not appear to be more effective than other activation policies for the unemployed”, should provide additional elements for making decisions based on a more solid knowledge base.

Is the apparent ineffectiveness of the programmes due to poorly designed training activities? Is it possible that the sectors chosen for the training programmes are in decline, are they activities in which training is not valued or for which the training offered is too specific or too general, or where there are no clear paths for professional development?

In turn, these questions refer us to key issues about how the need for qualifications is identified, how training systems are adapted to a changing production economy, changes in learning methodologies, etc., which must not be omitted in an evaluation of training.

A potential "impact evaluation of vocational training" (systems, programmes and plans, initiatives, training activities, etc.) suggests that even if it only targets the evaluation of impact, we probably need to define a "guide for guides" rather than an evaluation guide. Based on different variables (typology of the assessment bodies, of the training to be assessed), this "guide for guides" should propose a series of methodological approaches and "recommended" tools, establish a common terminology and define some basic indicators that can be shared among all the different objectives of each plan or programme.

Other material and formal issues need to be defined or agreed upon before embarking on a joint elaboration of the Guide. The former include the way qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluation are assessed. Among the latter is the possibility of developing an "Education Portal" rather than an "Evaluation Guide", so that the "Guide for Impact Evaluation" includes not only methodological recommendations but also tools, examples, cases of "good practices", etc.

These reflections, as an initial response to the open forum, are based on a highly positive valuation of all the contributions so far and their significance for the generation and dissemination of knowledge.

For this reason we suggest extending this forum into the future, as a dynamic approach to the strengthening of culture and the practice of evaluation in the sphere of vocational training. Once the development of the Impact Guide is under way, we consider that actions by CINTERFOR-OIT to widen the scope and objectives of the current effort would be beneficial since they would amount to maintaining a space for the debate and reinforcement of Evaluation in the sphere of vocational training.

In this respect, and on behalf of CIDEDEC, we affirm our desire to cooperate in this effort, in the understanding that improving the evaluation of vocational training contributes to improving our own vocational training and therefore, to increasing human productivity and development.

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