
**INVENTAIRE DES METHODES D’EVALUATION DANS LES ETATS
MEMBRES**

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Luxembourg**

Research Organisation	<p>The study centre on the situation of youth in Europe, founded in 1995 in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth/ National Service of Youth, is a non-profitmaking private association. Its main purposes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ to initiate research with a special focus on youth in the field of social sciences, especially field studies and evaluations of educational projects in a multicultural context;▪ to prepare and launch survey projects on the situation of the young in Luxembourg city and Luxembourg's greater area;▪ to promote the dialogue with large public and private European and international structures interested in the situation of youth;▪ to assist administrative and political decision makers in carrying out survey or research projects;▪ to organise seminars and meetings for researchers and decision makers to promote a better understanding of the socialisation processes of young people in Luxembourg in relation to the country's European neighbours.
Key words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Evaluation methods▪ Non-Formal Education▪ Relevance▪ Effectiveness▪ Efficiency▪ Quantitative▪ Qualitative▪ Social Research
Research subject	<p>An inventory of existing evaluation methods in the context of non-formal education in the EU member states, paying particular attention on methods for the evaluation of short-term pedagogical measures with multicultural features</p>
Methodology /Methods	<p>Interviews with National Agencies; collecting data and material used within National Agencies for output analysis and success control; interviews with colleagues from other research institutions; targeted research in expert literature in various countries.</p>

Abstract

This research comprises an inventory of existing evaluation methods in the context of non-formal education in the EU member states (Sweden, UK, Belgium, Austria, Portugal, The Netherlands, Italy and Germany), taking particular account of methods for the evaluation of short-time pedagogical measures with multicultural features.

The study involved qualitative and quantitative social research including interviews with National Agencies; collecting data and material used within National Agencies for output analysis and success control; interviews with colleagues from other research institutions; targeted research in expert literature in various countries.

The general conclusion is that there is a need for further systematic work to develop simple, but efficient and expressive qualitative evaluation approaches.

Changes in the initial Research Objectives

Due to time and organisational framework conditions, the objective of obtaining material for the Youth for Europe interim evaluation could not be met. Having carried out the preliminary study in the eight countries, it was clear that qualitative methods for output control had not been part of the evaluation methods applied in National Agencies at that date. That is why the methodological approach had to be changed for a more targeted literature study.

Main Research Results

Questions regarding the evaluation of pedagogical measures within non-formal education, of immediate effects and long-term learning effects cannot be answered without reference to the underlying educational context, in terms of concepts and also framework conditions. Qualitative social research is the only way to obtain information on the effectiveness of educational activities under conditions of intercultural non-formal education. Concepts of summative evaluation should be replaced by concepts of participatory, formative and responsive evaluation because the focus lies on subjective constructions: the description of individually perceived reality; the subjective meaning of a situation; the subjective interpretation of its relevance for action. This means that efficiency, i.e., the ratio of actual output to actual input *is not* the main focus of evaluation. The emphasis must be on effectiveness, i.e., the correspondence between the actual output and the desired outcome of a non-formal educational activity in a multicultural setting. Qualitative methods have not been used in a systematic way to date (1997) for assessment of the effects of a Community programme in the area of non-formal education of young people. Another outcome is the difficulty with the term itself – what does evaluation mean, and for whom? What is the real purpose behind calls for evaluation? Is it to supervise or to find out whether funds have been used in accordance with the donor's aims? The lack of subsequent administrative structures at national level entails that, very often, authorities at EU level define evaluation as a source of information which is to compensate the lack of subsequent national structures. Information very quickly takes on a political dimension, when it comes to the subsidiary distribution of programme funds – there is a major concern with relevance and efficiency in the countries that consider themselves as net payers within the EU, and there is much less interest in systematic evaluation (with a political dimension) in those countries considered to be net receivers. In the context of improving the quality of measures introduced, justifying new initiatives, gaining knowledge on the receivers' acceptance and use of the programmes, the European Commission has favoured "ex-ante" evaluation and "intermediate evaluation in partnership" as appropriate methods in past years. The respective keywords are *relevance*,

effectiveness (targeting) and efficiency. In this summary, we cannot discuss the details of all the implications. Our aim was to show that there remains a major need for discussion on a political, educational and scientific level between those who consider evaluation as obligatory, those who are concerned in the broadest sense of the word, and those who are to help in the process, whether as external evaluators or in pedagogical aspects of the project.

Conclusions from the Main Research Results

Matters of assessment and evaluation in educational projects in the framework of non-formal intercultural education can neither be approached in a technical, administrative way nor discussed exclusively in terms of quantifiable and comparable data. What is needed is dialogue between researchers and practitioners.

With an increased focus on political and educational aspects in Community programmes and, at the same time, increased decentralisation at operational level, the demands for output control and the identifying of learning effects become more complex and challenging. That there is a need for further systematic work to develop simple, but efficient and expressive qualitative evaluation approaches is beyond all doubt. To date, none of the efforts made has led to the desired result, partly due to somewhat "objective" reasons. Considering, for instance, that the "Youth for Europe" programme is particularly geared to facilitating access for disadvantaged youth to the programme and active participation by them in all phases, it is important to examine to what extent this objective has been reached. But for this, we need clear definitions of the term "disadvantaged", irrespective of possible political definitions in individual member states. Here we come up against the difficulties of comparative educational research, in addition to social status.

The educational level and social background of a young person are still considered to be important indicators, but we lack data collection methods which are comparable on a European scale, considering that school-leaving certificates are assessed differently throughout the EU and that there are different socio-political assessments of certain social and labour-market situations in which individuals might find themselves.

The acceptability of asking about educational levels and social backgrounds is also very different in individual member states (less acceptable in Scandinavia – more acceptable in, for example, the Federal Republic of Germany, perhaps due to a long tradition in socio-scientific research).

In this field, there is an urgent need to inform and act, if valid results at Community level are to be achieved in Community youth programmes such as "Youth for Europe". The preliminary study should aim to determine what developments have occurred since the first evaluation report in 1993, so as to be able to react to these findings in the interim evaluation in 1997.

In the light of the preliminary study in the eight countries, it is clear that no qualitative leap occurred between 1993 and 1997. Considering quantitative data, in most countries there are only very simple, mainly self-made data collection systems (in individual cases, some agencies do not dispose of the necessary soft- or hardware) which do not permit the assembly of complete databases. Usually, the findings cannot be compared with data from other countries and, very often, cannot be linked to other assessment criteria within the same system either.

Qualitative methods for output control have not been part of the evaluation methods applied in national agencies and their environments to date (1997); they are rarely used when

considering the assessment and selection of project applications, and if they are, it is only in a very rudimentary way and not yet operational. The aim of this study was not to launch a discussion on faults and failings. Our sole intention was to describe difficulties of evaluation and to point out that matters of assessment and evaluation in non-formal education projects can neither be dealt with in a technical, administrative way, nor discussed exclusively in terms of quantifiable and comparable data, but rather what is needed is dialogue between researchers and practitioners. This means that all those concerned have to become more open in their approach, and we must examine whether experiences from evaluation applications in other scientific fields and educational sectors can be transferred. Several studies from the late 80s and early 90s contain useful hints (e.g., Close Up Foundation, Co-operation North) and a more systemic approach to the literature than we were able to carry out for this preliminary study might also render useful experiences.

In addition, we must comment on non-formal education as opposed to school or other formalised education activities, in order to draw some conclusions for evaluation procedures.

Let us first try to define specific school characteristics (according to H.OTTEN, *Schulische und außerschulische Bildung*, in: *Erfahrungs-orientierte Methoden der politischen Bildung*. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Bonn 1988).

in the education sector of all European countries, school is the most differentiated and organised element, usually following state regulations, exercising extensive control and regulation, embedded in a specific national canon of standards, values and educational ideals young people up to approximately 16 years spend more time in school and in connection with school than anything else, not voluntarily or because they understand the necessity, but due to obligation in school, young people realise they are growing older – and that they will continue there until possibly attaining a certificate of being ready for whatever stage comes next. Growing older is not the problem, but rather the realisation that one is growing into a working life full of mostly outside, externally defined requirements, or the realisation that school not only dominates the current everyday life of young people but that it also predetermines or at least influences parts of the individual's future perspectives at a time when young people have plenty of other things to do.

Therefore, it is not surprising that due to this dominant, special position of school, educational research has mainly focused on school-related pedagogical matters, and that pedagogical output control has for many years been focused on teaching and learning in the classroom context.

Let us outline similar characteristics in the field of non-school or informal education:

the most different and therefore significantly characteristic feature of non-formal education is the principle of voluntary participation, along with the notion of "seizing the opportunity" and the active nature of participation non-formal education situations rarely involve compulsory elements – no particular type of behaviour is obligatory, but individual understanding determines a person's behaviour. This does not only apply to the young person, but also to the youth workers involved. They can only be "successful" in implementing certain educational objectives when these are accepted by the young participants. In most cases therefore, it is implicit that rules must be limited in number. Unlike schools, the flexible structures in non-formal education represent an important advantage. There are no examinations, nor is there a fixed curriculum; the main objective is experiential learning. All areas of social conduct and behaviour are of primary interest (so too in "Youth for Europe"), accordingly the methods are less object-targeted than in school, but more person-oriented. This orientation towards the participants involves orientation towards personal needs, in other words less external suggestion and a high degree of co- and self-determination instead.

This description shows that curricula in non-formal education are necessarily very manifold. They vary not only according to the widely different target groups, but also according to the varying intentions of organisers and youth workers. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are hardly any social-scientific studies on didactic concepts in non-formal education.

This problem also became evident in the 1997 interim evaluation of the "Youth for Europe" programme. Furthermore, it becomes clear why there is still no specification of social-scientific study methods in this field. This study cannot close the existing gap, but can only show the direction further developments might take, on the basis of our experience in applying different methods and concepts for the specific needs of intercultural non-school education.

We do not look at quantitative versus qualitative research in any more detail, because the necessity of applying qualitative approaches in the context of non-formal education should have become clear even from this summary. However, this does not imply that researchers in general reacted correspondingly. A lot of energy is still being invested in the development of quantitative and standardised methods, in the most definite possible distinction between cause and effect, in measuring and quantifying various phenomena – in short, in procedures aimed at enabling us to establish general rules which would be as universally valid as possible. In the field of natural sciences, such objectivistic ideals may be appropriate, but they do not live up to real-life human communication and interaction, because in this case, we must analyse subject and situation-specific aspects and consider different perspectives.

Based on our experience, qualitative social research is the only way to obtain information on the effectiveness of educational activities under conditions of intercultural non-formal education, because the starting point is the assumption that reality is only conveyed through social constructions, access to this reality can only be achieved by means of mutual interaction between the parties involved, persons affected by any kind of evaluation are subjects and are, therefore, the starting point and objective of the research, i.e., they are actively involved in the process, evaluation results cannot be automatically generalised or quantitatively processed; rather every individual case must be justified as the result of an interpretative discourse including all participants.

Main contribution to the objectives of the YFE Programme

This contribution provides evidence of the basic relevance of research into subjective theories in order to develop instruments of output control in the context of non-formal intercultural education as in the YFE Programme. This study, in line with the interim evaluation of the YFE programme, show the direction possible improvements might take.