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Evaluation for the Professional Development of Adult Education Staff

Introduction

The concepts and findings presented in this text are the outcome of the research conducted by the Polish Team of the international project titled Evaluation for the Professional Development of Adult Education Staff which aims at redefining the professional profile of the evaluator of adult education staff at a European level in order to guarantee the quality of adult education (<http://www.edueval.eu/pl>).

The research was conducted from April to June 2014 and involved two methods: desk research and semistructured interview. Desk research focused on three areas: national rules and regulations, national educational debate, the practices. The aim of the interview was to explore personal representations, ideas, knowledge, problems, needs and expectations of workers/providers involved in the evaluation of adult education staff. Three main subjects were explored: adult education, the evaluation of adult education staff, professional profiles involved in the evaluation of adult education staff and their skills/competences. This part of the study is based on interviews with 6 not-officially recognized (informal) evaluators (people who in addition to their professional or social responsibilities perform evaluation activities, however evaluation does not constitute their main professional activity) and with 4 officially recognized evaluators (officially acknowledged evaluators of adult education – superintendents). The interviews with the first group were conducted by Karolina Geletta and with the second one by Stefania Szczurkowska.

Adult education

At European level "adult education" and 'continuing education' are often used interchangeably. The term 'continuing education' is defined as 'education in schools for adults as well as the development of general knowledge, vocational skills formation and ability development in out-of-school forms by persons who have graduated from compulsory education'. (The System of Education in Poland, 2010, p. 79)

Adult education is provided mainly in two kinds of settings: school and non-school settings embracing continuing education units, practical education units and in-service training centres. Every year increasing enrolment rates in all types of schools for adults (excluding post-secondary schools) show the total number of approximately 200 thousand learners. At the same time, the participation of the adult population in continuing education in out-of-school forms is relatively low in comparison with other European Union member states, and it indicates approximately 10%. The low level of involvement in learning mostly refers to the part of the population aged 45-64, whose shortcomings in education are related to languages and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, as well as to skills demanded by the competitive labour market (The System of Education in Poland, 2012). In 2013-2014 there were 2940 schools for adults with 241.4 thousand learners enrolled. Additionally there were 98 public continuing education centres (school settings), 163 public continuing education centres (out-of-school settings), 151 public practical training centres and 321 public and non-public further and in-service training centres. The total number of vocational qualification courses was 963 with almost 35 thousand adult learners (The System of Education in Poland, 2014).

Adult education, also referred to as continuing education aims to, firstly, enable adults to acquire and broaden general knowledge, and, secondly, to acquire vocational qualifications and skills which are necessary or even indispensable to perform professional activities in a given occupation or to hold the position. The crucial objective of in-service training is to adjust knowledge and skills to changing technologies and work organization standards, and preparing the adult population for a change of job. As far as training of the unemployed is concerned, the chief objective is to quickly respond to current demands of local labour markets by adjusting the skills or qualifications of the unemployed to such demands.

Policy and legislative framework

The main tasks and aims of continuing education are defined in the following legal regulations:

- The School Education Act of September 7, 1991;

- The Act of 21 November 2001 named: Regulations introducing the reform of school system;
- The amended version of the School Education Act - amendment of the 27 June 2003;
- The Act on Promotion of Employment and Institutions of the Labour Market of 20 April 2004;
- The Act "Law on Higher Education" of 27 July 2005.
- The Regulation of the Minister of National Education on continuing education in out-of-school settings of 11 January 2012 (The System of Education in Poland, 2012; 2014)

Under certain conditions, continuing education can be also provided on the basis of the legislation on economic activity.

The School Education Act of September 7, 1991, with subsequent amendments, states that continuing education can be provided on daily, extra-mural, and distance-learning bases. Tasks are carried out by centres for continuing education, practical training centres, and other in-service training institutions. Settings providing continuing education in out-of-school forms can be run by associations, foundations and religious organizations. Out-of-school continuing education is also offered by folk universities.

The Act of 21 November 2001 named "Regulations introducing the reform of school system" caused changes in the functioning of adult schools by introducing the new types of post-gymnasium settings.

The amended version of the School Education Act - amendment of the 27 June 2003 was vitally important, because it separated the continuing education centres called *CKU* (CECs) and practical training centres named *CKP* (PTCs) from schools as settings with different statutory goals. *CKUs* and *CKPs* (CECs and PTCs), being given a new shape and position, have a say in the creation of regional and national networks of continuing education settings thanks to the integration of the activities undertaken by various continuing education institutions.

The Act on Promotion of Employment and Institutions of the Labour Market of 20 April 2004 gave a legal framework to public employment services, training settings, social dialogue institutions and local partnership institutions, among others. The Act established a Register of Training Institutions as a meaningful labour market tool. The Register lists both public and non-public bodies offering education in out-of-school forms. The registration gives an open access to institutions with the accreditation from the regional educational superintendents. The Register facilitates the access to training, and, at the same time, it plays an important role in the quality

improvement of this training. The bodies which are on the list are eligible to provide training to the unemployed.

The Act "Law on Higher Education" of 27 July 2005 defines regulations referring to post-graduate studies and training courses addressed to the adult population by the sector of higher education settings.

The Regulation of the Minister of National Education on continuing education in out-of-school settings of 11 January 2012 gives a legal framework for adult teaching, vocational courses, fees, division and responsibilities of setting, qualification examinations.

Distribution of responsibilities

The Minister of National Education is responsible for the field of adult education at national level. He works as coordinator through the actions of the Department of Vocational and Continuing Education, in particular. The Minister cooperates with the Minister of Science and Higher Education, the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, and the Minister of Health.

The district authorities (*pl: powiat*) are in power of running post-gymnasium schools including those for adults, continuing education centres - CECs (*pl: CKU*) and practical training centres - PTCs (*pl: CKP*) plus other non-school settings.

The community authorities (*pl: gmina*) which are the lowest in the responsibility share have a say on primary and lower secondary schools for adults (excluding special schools).

All public schools for adults are organized and run by territorial self-governments units, meanwhile non-public schools for adults are organized and run by individual persons or by associations, social and religious organizations, among others.

Funding

It is worth mentioning that a homogeneous system of financing adult education does not exist on a national scale. The only regulated model is connected with the field of training of the unemployed who are seeking jobs. Its basis is determined by the regulations of the Act on Promotion of Employment and Institutions of the Labour Market of 20 April 2004. Training and re-training aimed to increase work opportunities and improve vocational qualifications can be financed from the Labour Fund. Labour offices of the district authorities level (*pl: powiat*) are in charge of offering training schemes or forms of professional activity to those seeking jobs.

The costs of adult education in public schools are covered from the resources of territorial self-governments. According to the School Education Act of September 7, 1991 with subsequent amendments adult education in public schools is free of charge. Due to the fact that financial resources are simply insufficient, some of the expenses - except for teachers' salaries - by the decision of students' self-government, that is taken on a voluntary basis, are covered from its budget. The self-government also determines the amount which has to be paid.

The costs of adult education in non-public schools are covered from tuition fees charged by the settings. Non-public schools with the rights of public schools are eligible to receive a refund from the state budget.

Out-of-school settings of adult education also charge fees for their services. Financial resources come from the following sources: state budget, employers, students' contribution (personal income), structural funds. However, it turns out that the costs of a huge majority of training courses are covered from the students' pockets. Approximately one third of financial resources come from the European Social Fund. The smallest share is contributed by the employers. (The System of Education in Poland, 2010)

Programmes and providers

The most important institutions and forms of adult education in the country can be divided into two categories: school and non-school settings. School settings consist of:

- public and non-public schools for adults including: primary schools (a very limited number - just only five in operation within the country), lower secondary schools, general upper secondary schools, vocational upper secondary schools, supplementary upper secondary schools, basic vocational schools and non-tertiary post-secondary schools;
- public and non-public higher education institutions (HEIs): first- and second-cycle programmes (Bachelor's and Master's degree), third cycle (doctoral) programmes, non-degree postgraduate programmes, open university courses, third-age university courses, including those based on distance learning, conferences, workshops and seminars;
- public continuing education centres - CESs (*pl: CKU*), practical training centres - PTCs (*pl: CKP*) and further and in-service training centres: courses, vocational courses, seminars, practical placements, on-the-job practical training, theoretical in-service training of young employees. (The System of Education in Poland, 2012).

Non-school settings consist of:

- non-public institutions for continuing education and practical training administered by associations and individuals;
- people's universities;
- employers: courses, on-the-job training, job shadowing, rotation, replacement, learning clubs, supervised individual learning, fairs, conferences, coaching, mentoring, cooperation with equipment and software suppliers;
- employers' organizations and trade unions;
- training institutions including those registered in the Register of Training Institutions;
- public employment services: support tools, including training, practical placements, vocational training for adults;
- research institutions, research foundations and the Polish Academy of Sciences units: non-degree postgraduate programmes and doctoral programmes, courses, conferences, seminars, workshops;
- institutions specialized in specific areas of study. (The System of Education in Poland, 2012).

Admission requirements

Schools for adults can be attended by everybody who is over 18 years of age. However, in specific circumstances schools are also open to individuals aged 16 and above, as well as to those aged 15 under the condition of having work experience in the so-called Voluntary Labour Corps or those who are in jail or in police custody. 18-years old people are also entitled to take an extramural examination in all subjects included in the curricula of all kinds of schools for adults.

Non-degree postgraduate programmes are open to those who have completed a first-cycle Bachelor's degree programme or a second-cycle Master's degree programme. If it is written in the curriculum, the setting offering a non-degree postgraduate programme is allowed to define additional admission requirements.

Uniform rules of admission requirements for non-school settings do not exist. They strongly depend on education providers and the objectives of training.

The employers who organize courses for their staff take into consideration the following elements when admitting: the level of education already completed, psychological and physical dispositions, work experience and some additional skills. They should obey the rules of equal opportunities as far as gender, age, disability, political opinions or religion are concerned.

The unemployed are sent to courses by labour offices on the basis of criteria agreed by the training setting and the employer. At individual requests of the unemployed persons, the district labour office is in the position to send them to a job practice. This happens when the unemployed are under the age of 25, have no qualifications at all or have been jobless for a long period of time. In this particular situation, training should not exceed 12 months and it needs to be agreed in a contract between the district labour office and the employer. (www.men.gov.pl, www.mpips.gov.pl)

Modes of delivery

Adult education in post-gymnasium schools is organized in the system of day or extramural forms. Teachers may choose curricula and textbooks from among those officially approved. They are also allowed to develop and follow their own curricula under the condition that they cover required subject contents included in the core curriculum. Teaching methods are usually adjusted to the age and the abilities of individual learners whose substantial work is done independently. They greatly depend on the number of learners, their work experience and the teaching aids which are available in a particular setting.

In out-of-school forms of continuing education mostly adopted methods are to be mentioned: different types of courses (offered particularly in big companies of long-lasting in-service training traditions), workshops, seminars, conferences, practical placements and vocational preparation.

Continuing education gives a strong emphasis on modular programmes due to their flexibility and independence in the study process. The completion of every module is certified by a separate document and the completion of a full set of modules means graduation from training in a given vocation.

Assessment, qualifications, certificates

In school settings for adults both internal and external assessment systems are in operation. The internal assessment is based on a grading scale from 1 to 6, where 1 means unsatisfactory, 2 - acceptable, 3 - satisfactory, 4 - good, 5 - very good, 6 - excellent. The promotion to a higher level takes place after each semester. Adult learners complete a primary, lower or upper secondary school if at the end of the final semester they have received marks higher than unsatisfactory from all compulsory subjects. In addition to that they need to take the final test and pass the final examination at the end of primary and lower secondary instruction. The test/examination results have

no influence on the student's graduation. Being external and obligatory, they are based on uniform national examination standards.

Assessment and promotion in the extramural type of school is regulated by the examination system which consists of exams from all compulsory subjects. In basic vocational and upper secondary vocational schools adult students are obliged to pass vocational exams, as well.

Public schools for adults award certificates or state diplomas. Students in general and vocational upper secondary schools obtain a matriculation certificate (*pl: matura*) in order to continue education at a higher school level. School leaving certificates for primary, lower and upper secondary, as well as for basic vocational schools can also be obtained through an extramural examination system (exclusively in the written form).

In non-school settings methods for assessing the outcomes are defined by the providers. Courses and practical placements can - but do not have to be - completed after an examination assessing the level of vocational skills for occupations listed in the classification of occupations for vocational education and training or the classification of occupations and specializations for the labour market.

A qualifying examination leading to the vocational title and the title of Master Craftman is one of the tools validating vocational qualifications. The exam consists of two parts - theoretical and practical. (The System of Education in Poland, 2012; 2014)

Quality assurance

Quality assurance in formal adult education which is supervised by the Minister of National Education and which embraces schools for adults, continuing education settings, practical training centres and further training centres is subject to pedagogical supervision. This supervision is performed by school heads and education superintendents (*pl: kuratorzy*). The principles and regulations are the same as in schools for those under 18 years of age.

The quality of education in adult schools which offer instruction in specific vocations is also assured within the framework of the external assessment system reflecting the system adopted by the schools for youngsters. External vocational examinations are based on the examination requirement standards set up by the Central Examination Commission and implemented by Regional Examination Commissions.

Quality assurance in non-formal adult education is subject to accreditation which confirms that given institutions and training centers meet specific requirements. The accreditation, according to the provision of the School Education Act of September 7, 1991, can be given either to the

entire set of courses or just only to a part of it. The applicants come from both public and non-public settings. The accreditation is awarded by the education superintendent (*pl: kurator*) under whose supervision is the area in which the institution is located. Non-formal adult education settings may also be registered by regional employment offices. Due to the fact that the accreditation which has been in force since 2003 is on a voluntary basis, the out-of-school settings operating in compliance with the rules of free business activity may avoid any quality related supervision. (The System of Education in Poland, 2010; www.men.gov.pl)

The evaluators of adult education staff

Officially recognized evaluators

Evaluation of the adult education staff

The officially recognized evaluators are school inspectors – chief education officers performing analysis and assessment of an educational setting and its performance. They work in pedagogical supervision bodies, for example school boards, though not exclusively.

As interviews with officially recognized evaluators show, evaluation performed in an educational setting should not be regarded merely in terms of evaluation of its staff. As one evaluator puts it: “whenever conducting evaluation in an establishment we want to depict the entire institution”, and not only individual members of the staff. “It is the task of evaluation (...) to show weak and strong points of an organization, not people”. In the legal sense evaluation is a practical research carried out in school or an establishment. According to one of the evaluators “it refers to holistic evaluation understood as external evaluation performed on the background of all the requirements imposed on schools and establishments, which need to be fulfilled (...), listed in the appendix to the regulation.”

The aims of evaluation of adult education should be perceived through the entire organization, its strong and weak points and especially areas requiring development. Consequently, the evaluation is to facilitate the development of the institution and its educators, so that optimal teaching or training conditions are created. Additionally, in the process of evaluation it is determined whether the institution follows adopted goals, if it develops and achieves the quality it pursuits. Still, the fundamental aim is the wellbeing of the learners, professional development of the people and the establishment, enabling appropriate decision regarding development. In a bigger picture, evaluation helps to build local educational strategy on the level of local

government and community. On the national scale it also facilitates the creation of educational policy by communicating to the Minister of Education to what extent and on what level requirements are met. It should be noted however, that the evaluators are not in the position to impose anything.

From the point of view of the evaluators the most important aims of evaluation are:

1. The verification of requirements imposed by the state,
2. The improvement of quality performance in a setting.

As it has been noted above, officially recognized evaluators do not possess the authority to evaluate single teachers. Instead an evaluation report refers to the entire establishment including all its elements (staff, management etc.). It is the performance of the setting that is evaluated, whereas the evaluation of individual teachers is done by the head of their school, accordingly to the requirements expressed in art. 6 of the Teacher's Charter (*pl: Karta Nauczyciela*).

Therefore, the evaluation of adult education staff is performed in accordance both with external and internal procedures. Every school is expected to perform internal evaluation. Members of the adult educating staff are evaluated by the head teacher. The usual source of information about a teacher is a report submitted by every teacher twice a year – in the form of self-evaluation, while the headteacher performs the evaluation once every five years. The Centre for Education Development (*pl: Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji*) acting for the Minister of National Education each year performs evaluation of its activity in accordance to its internal guidelines. On the other hand, the external evaluation based on quality model is not performed at a determined frequency. It is simply assumed, that all establishments will undergo such process within 5 years. The external mode – recognition of requirement levels is described in the appendix to Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 on pedagogical supervision (2009).

Effects of evaluation, provided they occur, are positive. It is the head teacher and the teachers who decide if they make use of evaluation. In the opinion of one of the interviewed evaluators “unfortunately the reports often end up locked in drawers.” Some of the evaluated establishments (the exact percentage is impossible to be concluded, as the evaluators significantly differed in their estimations) make use of the reports for own development. In this way the evaluation facilitates a positive change. Apart from this, the change in the school's perception can be regarded as an effect of evaluation, since the setting starts to be identified with a growing number of interested parties – local authorities, researchers, employers.

The list of difficulties and distractions regarding evaluation of adult education is quite long. The evaluators raised the issue of the time consumption, technical problems with on-line tools (questionnaires), insufficient understanding of the evaluation process by the evaluated and their reluctance to cooperate, unnecessary atmosphere of an external inspection, deluging evaluators with volumes of unnecessary documentation and attempts of positive distortion of information given by the person undergoing evaluation, reluctance of the management to admit a failure.

The evaluator profile, methodologies of the evaluation and evaluation experience

Professional experience of officially recognized evaluators usually includes two categories: experience in teaching (on various levels of education including academic) and experience in evaluator's work (inspector, senior inspector). Additional functions of the interviewed relating to evaluation are project coordinator in The Programme for Supporting Effectiveness of Supervision in Pedagogical System and Evaluation of School Work Quality, managerial positions in education (i.e. a headmaster), a methodical advisor, a project evaluator. It should be noted that all formal evaluators have many years of experience in working on managerial or didactic position in schools. Therefore they are not only well-acquainted with evaluation, but they also possess vast merits-related knowledge in the evaluated areas. This distinctively differs them from the not-officially recognized evaluators, most of which declared having none or insignificant didactic experience.

The officially recognized evaluators have various scopes of responsibility. They design the evaluation process, negotiate timetables for the particular evaluation process with the setting's headmasters, participate in designing tools, invent additional questions, perform evaluation research (online questionnaires, interviews), enter the evaluation data into the database, work out the results of the study and present them to the authorities of the evaluated settings, write reports, supervise evaluation on a lower levels (for example school board pedagogical supervision), participate in drawing legislative acts relating to evaluation and coordinate system projects regarding evaluation.

The qualifications required to be an officially recognized evaluator are: a certificate, a diploma, MA title, pedagogical background and a half-year-long specialist multimodal training of 160 hours with a practical part. The courses are conducted as part of the Programme for Supporting Effectiveness of Supervision in Pedagogical System and Evaluation of School Work Quality – Stage III, organized in Cracow by the Jagiellonian University in cooperation with the Centre for Education Development. Lessons are divided

into editions called “chunks” (*pl: pociągi*). They are addressed exclusively to inspectors in the role of external evaluators. Additionally the officially recognized evaluators are required to participate in complementary methodological trainings every two years. These recurring trainings are called in the professional jargon “threading” (*pl: bieżnikowanie*).

According to the interviewed, the desired qualities of an evaluator (which are also regarded as the areas of deficiency) are following:

- communication skills (including: group communication) and interpersonal skills (including: team work, compromising with persons of different opinions);
- analytic skills;
- acquaintance with law and ability to put it into practice;
- knowledge and experience in the area of functioning of an educational establishment;
- patience.

The interviewed evaluators themselves also notice further need for trainings: in the area of research tools (perceived as ambiguous), data analysis and ability to make a “fair report”. An important quality of all officially recognized evaluators is the awareness of further training need relating to particular evaluation elements, as well as the need to exchange experience though participation in international conferences and making themselves familiar with research results relating to education evaluation.

As far as additional courses for any evaluators of adult education are concerned, the interviewed evaluators pointed out that the courses should focus on an anagogic aspect of the evaluation subjects and raise awareness of a different approach of adults towards change, new technologies, fear of competition in comparison to younger persons. Apart from this the curriculum should broaden knowledge about the special features of educational settings. An important part of training should be dedicated to data analysis. Additionally the training should develop evaluator’s organizational skills, especially time management and scheduling work in the process of evaluation.

The evaluation tools applied by evaluators are mostly questionnaires, interviews, conversations and complementary to them: observations, document analysis.

The evaluation embraces eleven requirements imposed at adult schools, in accordance to appendix to regulation on pedagogical supervision. Moreover, it relates to most of team skills, flexibility forced by individualization of teacher work, workmates’ relations, documentation order, the setting itself on the broader local society background and finally so called “project skills”.

The standards of evaluation applied by the officially recognized evaluators are:

- adequateness of the actions to the aims and the needs of the evaluated;
- regularity;
- utility (to inspire innovation in the setting);
- commonness;
- implementable conclusions;
- teamwork;
- effectiveness.

Additionally, the critical aspects of evaluation are considered to be the objectiveness and making sure no harm is done to individuals (from the evaluated setting). Another important factor is the appropriate atmosphere and keeping in mind that the evaluation is to enable self-development.

Not- officially recognized evaluators

What is the evaluation of the adult education staff

Not-officially recognized (informal) evaluators are people who in addition to their professional or social responsibilities perform evaluation activities regarding adult education, despite the fact, that evaluation does not constitute their main professional activity. They work in educational settings or are involved in educational projects for adults. However, their responses to the question who are evaluators of adult education do not allow for creating one consistent image of a person performing this function. They, as a group, cannot be allocated in any particular structural or competence background. Some of the interviewed referred to evaluators as people who completed courses or have vast knowledge/experience in the matter, are experienced in training, teaching or have psychological knowledge. Some declared that the role of evaluators is performed by the members of supervisory boards, who prepare evaluation survey and then ensure it is filled in, others – that they are employees of particular projects or specialists in monitoring and evaluation.

The interviews have shown that not only the group of non-officially recognized evaluators is heterogeneous but also its members do not share the same view on evaluation of the adult education staff. Different definitions given by them can be divided into the following approaches:

- appraisal: “appraisal of the quality of the service offered by specialist educators aiming at choosing the best one”; “systematic study of educators and working towards estimation of its usefulness and effectiveness of didactic activities”;

- development: giving (the educator) “feedback on areas of improvement”, “competence development”;
- hybrid: combining education quality and educators’ qualifications.

It should be noted that a part of the interviewed informal evaluators found it difficult to define the very evaluation of adult education.

The evaluated are mostly teachers, academics and specialists (course instructors not graduated in teaching). This included the setting employees as well as subcontractors from outside of the setting. Only in one case the evaluated were participants (learners) instead of educators – this applies to persons over the age of 55 (University of the Third Age). The main difference compared to officially recognized evaluators seems to be the subject of the evaluation: personal (teachers) vs organizational (setting).

According to informal evaluators the aims of evaluation of adult education are of diagnostic, verification, utilitarian and developmental nature. It should be noted, that particular evaluators tend to focus on a single type of aims, for example:

- monitoring the quality of the services rendered,
- learning about strong and weak points of the trainer,
- seeking good practice,
- allowing for intervention,
- tailoring the education quality to the needs of the recipients,
- improvement of the quality of the lessons held.

Some of the informal evaluators admitted not to draw upon internal evaluation model or that these models differ depending on the project. On the other hand, the tools for the evaluation are usually the same (questionnaires and observation). The important notice is that during the interviews the question for an applied model of the evaluation usually caused hesitation. This can be interpreted as a symptom of immature culture of evaluation and little attention to comparability of the data, as well as extemporary character of evaluation itself.

The aims of the evaluation of adult education also differ. It may be for an appraisal of educators and resources of the entire organization, its readiness for maintaining competitive advantage on the labour market, especially regarding changes teaching methods and updating knowledge. Other aims include verification of the quality of the services rendered and making personal decisions (e.g. continuation or discontinuation of cooperation with trainers), as well as understanding and eliminating problems.

The difficulties with the evaluation of adult teachers can be assigned to the following categories:

- teacher related (inability to face critical judgment, omniscient attitude, fear of judgment);
- technique related (not asking the right questions, creating inadequate tools);
- respondent related (insufficient number of returned questionnaires, unbalanced representation, untrue answers).

The effects of evaluation is considered by the evaluators as positive. Thanks to evaluation the head of the school or project gains a better insight into qualifications of the staff and can widespread good practice in the entire setting. For the part of the staff, it overcomes its reluctance to evaluation and gains a valuable feedback, and, consequently, increases the awareness of its competences and deficiencies as well as receives suggestions leading to self-development. Other effect of the evaluation is the better quality of services and sometimes redesigning of the programme.

The evaluator profile, methodologies of the evaluation and evaluation experience

Informal evaluators justify their evaluation qualifications with other performed functions, professional achievements or experience in other spheres of life. The interviewed mentioned their experience as an academic, vast interdisciplinary experience and certificates (not related to evaluation), prestige of their occupation and professional success (not related to evaluation), psychological or sociological background, experience in social studies or teaching.

Informal evaluators perform various tasks connected to evaluation in an organization. These include: “quality evaluation, i.e. observation, making suggestions, giving feedback on team relations, abilities, qualifications, performance, as well as cooperation between team members.” On the other hand, they perform: “quantitative evaluation, namely (...) questionnaires”. As part of their responsibilities they also conduct monitoring visits. Another responsibility concerns creating questionnaires addressed to training participants. Among the most often reported activities the following were listed: evaluation of educator staff resources, evaluation of external training providers, creation of evaluation tools (questionnaires), holding inspections, analyzing quantitative data and reporting.

The subject of evaluation is the education process itself, and its elements e.g. knowledge of the trainer, handouts and general reception i.e. target group satisfaction. In respect to training providers evaluation criterion is based on the expert’s knowledge, the ability to pass it on, the personality of

the trainer, the ability to cooperate with a particular recipient group (e.g. elderly people), team work skills, flexibility and correctness of the records (documentation order). Additionally, the criteria of self-development and education were applied, but only towards the internal staff. Judging from the response patterns of some evaluators it can be concluded that evaluation in some cases is performed just to keep records, and the key touchstone is appropriate documentation.

The tools used by informal evaluators are questionnaire, observation, scenario and non-scenario interview, discussion and essay. It should be noted that examination was not listed among evaluation techniques. Additionally, whenever implied, this idea was strongly opposed to.

According to the informal evaluators positive evaluation has three basic meanings:

1. gives feedback on educational success e.g. knowledge increase /satisfaction of 85% or
2. gives practical feedback e.g. relating to offer structure, programme, eliminable errors, or
3. every evaluation is positive since by definition it is pro-developmental.

Negative evaluation can have the following meanings:

1. training brings no increase of competencies or achieved increase is unsatisfactory (below 25%) or participants claim that training was of little use for them;
2. feedback leading to erroneous conclusions;
3. reluctance to introduce staff changes in accordance to the post-evaluative conclusions.

The majority of informal evaluators had not taken part in any courses regarding evaluation. Nevertheless, they have positive opinion of their evaluation knowledge and competences. The training needs they reported in relate to current specific needs occurring in the evaluator's everyday work (e.g. evaluation in an innovative project, evaluation in juvenile education), and not to universal evaluation elements. According to them, a training in the area of evaluation would merely result in a formal acknowledgement of their knowledge or skills in the form of a certificate or a diploma.

Conclusions

The most significant conclusions from the research presented above are, as follows:

1. Adult education in Poland is provided both in the form of general education of different levels as well as professional courses

and trainings aiming at developing qualifications to meet labour market requirements.

2. Providers of adult educational services vary to a large extent. They are both public and non-public institutions, which – depending on the programme and specific features of the target group – provide education either paid or free of charge.
3. Continuing adult education is mainly driven by the need of improving one's own competitiveness on the labour market. It also aims at updating practical and theoretical knowledge.
4. Numerous legislative acts regulate issues relating to continuing education of adults. Since the adult education is connected with various economic and social spheres it is supervised by a number of state entities (i.e. Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Administration and Digitalization).
5. The responsibility for adult education in Poland is with individual ministers, but also with regional and local governments, since some of the settings of adult education are their subordinates.
6. Funding of adult education comes from different sources –it is financed by the state and local governments, from special purpose and contributory funds (e.g. Labour Fund, State Fund for Rehabilitation of the Disabled, Civil Initiatives Fund, etc.), and from European funds (especially the European Social Fund). A significant part of adult education is provided commercially and the receivers of educational services participate in costs themselves.
7. Forms of adult education and, consequently, settings are different and depend on the needs of the service receivers who either compliment their education or acquire higher qualifications (primary, secondary schools for adults, vocational schools, post-secondary schools, language, medical, pedagogical and social work colleges, higher education institutions, training institutions, lifelong and vocational education centres).
8. Adult education falls under the responsibility of different public institutions dealing with social policy: employment agencies, Voluntary Labour Corps, social welfare centres, district authorities family support centres, trade unions, etc.
9. Adult education is addressed to people over the age of 18, with exception for those over the age 15-16, for example Voluntary Labour Corps members.

10. The model of adult education in Poland is complex. It is a kind of public-market hybrid with a small share of non-governmental organizations. Funding system is mixed and based on public, private and European sources.
11. The research shows that Poland lacks a universal model of the evaluation of adult education institutions and their employees. In many cases not even internal evaluation model is applied. The aims and tools of evaluation are also not homogeneous.
12. The advantages of evaluation are among others: the development of education quality, feedback, more effective teaching / training, better organized didactic process and the development of educational institutions.
13. Large part of the interviewed emphasized that besides the benefits, the evaluation is burdened by numerous disadvantages. They include: the misuse of the evaluation as substitute for control and supervision, fatigue by performing and subjecting to evaluation, frequently noted shallowness and pointlessness of evaluation questionnaires, responding to questions with little care, emotional answering to questionnaires, superficial evaluation, time consuming process of evaluation.
14. The group of informal evaluators consists of those individuals, who have no formal background to perform the evaluation process. However, they believe their other competencies allow them to perform the evaluation. In many cases people with vast didactic or managerial experience, but not necessarily qualified in the field of evaluation become evaluators of adult teaching / training. Meanwhile formal evaluators need a proper course to perform their duty.
15. Most common method of evaluation is a questionnaire. Others include interviews, discussions, essays or lesson observations. Sometimes also tests or document analysis are used.
16. Desired competencies for evaluators were: knowledge of statistics, ability to create evaluative tools, graduation in sociology or related faculty, and interpersonal competencies.
17. Formal evaluators consider themselves inspectors – experts in analysis and pedagogical supervision. As they stress, the subject of performed evaluation is not the staff but the activity of the entire teaching setting. Only the work of formal evaluators is based on standardized external procedure. They also have high

competencies in the field of evaluation and didactics, as well as managing continuing education institution.

18. Formal evaluators must have pedagogical background confirmed by a certificate and / or university diploma. They also need to attend 160-hour training in evaluation of the school performance. Every two years the formal evaluators improve their qualifications through additional methodological courses.
19. Each adult education setting in Poland has to be evaluated every 5 years.

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Evaluation for the Professional Development of Adult Education Staff¹

The paper presents the outcomes of the studies on evaluation of adult education staff conducted in the international research project EduEval financed by the European Commission. The first part shows the rules of the adult education system in Poland, among others: school and out-of-school settings, admission requirements, modes of delivery, assessment, qualifications and certificates, quality assurance and funding. The second part is based on data collected during interviews with official and unofficial evaluators and depicts the evaluation of adult education settings and its staff. The analysis focuses on the definition of evaluation, its aims, tools, standards and results, as well as the evaluator profile, one's tasks, key competences and difficulties faced during the evaluation.

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