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Evaluation in Adult Education

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WHAT IS EVALUATION?

Evaluation in adult education is a systematic, ongoing process of assessing the effectiveness of learning programs and the progress of adult learners. It measures changes in behavior, skills, and knowledge, aiming to improve educational quality and ensure learning goals are met, often through methods like self-assessment, portfolios, and feedback rather than just traditional testing.

EVALUATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

As educators we all know how evaluation is important in a teaching learning process. Evaluation is one of the most difficult task, we have as educators. It is imperative to know the extent to which we are attaining some of our objective. It must be undertaken to see if we are meeting the needs of the adults in our programs. The evaluation process – before an adequate job of evaluation can be done by educators, stating of goals and objectives clearly required. To check the kinds of behavioral changes among the people, evaluation is necessary. When objectives are stated in ways that can be quantified, we can build instruments which measure the degree to which we have achieved our objectives and determine whether we need to reteach in light of what we know was not learned.

Unfortunately it is difficult to define ways to measure educational changes, but evaluation must be done and we must continually try to find improved methods of appraising whether the “learners” has truly learned. A evaluation process must be built into the program from the beginning. A dynamic evaluation requires four points for procedures:

- A clear goal
- An appraisal knowledge of the present position in relation to goal
- The position at some past time (for e.g. a pre-test) and
- The learning resources available to be brought to bear upon the desired goal.

Evaluation is essential for bringing about improvement in the quality and efficacy of any programme. Adult education programmes, in order to be suitable and effective, need be evaluated from time to time. Like adult education programmes, their evaluation is also characterized by flexibility, heterogeneity (Quality of being different), participation and relevance (Significance). This is again faced with some special problems, viz., absence of structured learning situations, variations in the rate

of learning of the educands, lack of motivation among adult learners, non-availability of evaluation tools and expertise.

WHO SHOULD EVALUATE?

Every person, who is the part of the programme, can contribute to the evaluation process.

- **The Learners:** Since the programme is implemented on them, their views regarding the implementing of the programme can be used. They can opine about their learning through interviews or questionnaire.
- **The Instructors:** These instructors are the direct implementers of the programme. They are in the best position to judge the results achieved, and what changes need to be brought about in the programme.
- **Administrators:** Administrators play a chief role in administrating the whole programme. Therefore, they become the best judges to decide about the effectiveness of the programme. They should report about their observations to the whole team of programme planning planners and implementers.
- **Outside Experts:** It is describe to call experts to evaluate the whole programme, who will be in a better position to see things objectively. Remark of the expert adds weightage to the whole evaluation process.

TECHNIQUES OF EVALUATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

There are multifarious methods and techniques of evaluation like observation, interview, questionnaire, pre-post assessment etc. The methods which can be used for evaluation in Adult education are:

1. Observation: It is an important technique of evaluation which depends on the faculty of seeing, hearing, feeling and noting. It is the most direct method of collecting information as the observer tries to obtain data directly from the scene or skills, attitude and behavior of the person involved. Evaluators are required to observe objectively without any bias (Unfairness) and record their observation immediately so that there is no distortion of information due to forgetfulness. By observations, the evaluators can judge the improvement in skill, whether the learners are enjoying the programme or not.

2. Interview: Another method of collecting information is through interview. There are several types of interviews- individual interviews, group structured and unstructured. Social awareness and functionality components of Adult Education can be evaluated by employing interview, as technique illiterates and semi-literates. Before eliciting information from learners, rapport is established with them so that they are able to express themselves freely and fully without any fear or shyness. While asking questions care should be taken that these are clear , simple, direct, short and relevant to the subject.

3. Questionnaire/Schedule: Questionnaire is an extensively (Broadly) used device with respondents having adequate reading and writing skills. The word questionnaire refers to a “series of questions” which the respondent fills in himself. There are two types of questions closed-ended (That provides a set of answers from which the respondent must choose. Multiple choice questions are close-ended questions) and open-ended (Unstructured question in which (unlike in a multiple choice question) possible answers are not suggested, and the learners answers it in his/her own words). The closed form requires the respondent to give answer only in Yes or No or put a tick mark against one of the choices, the open-ended questions on other hand, gives freedom to the individual answer in his/her own words. Evaluators can use either or both the types of questions while constructing a questionnaire.

4. Conversational Approach: Adult learners may not be able to respond to written questions through written answers. Therefore, one may adopt simple conversational approach to assess the knowledge and attitudes of learners in a natural setting without making them aware that they are being evaluated.

5. Participatory Evaluation: In this technique the evaluators are expected to refrain from taking unilateral decisions on the effectiveness of programme, and an individual, falling under the preview of evaluation may actively be involved in the process of evaluation. Both the evaluators and the participants may set together and take stock of the situation. Each participant may be given freedom to say how he/she feels or experiences the situation.

6. Pre – Post Assessment: The most widely used evaluation design is a traditional pre- post test, where participants are asked a series of questions both at the beginning of a program (pre test) and then again at the program’s completion (post test). This design is believed to measure changes in participant knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors regarding the program content is (e.g., disciplining children). In general, evaluators prefer to measure twice to detect accurately any participant changes from the program participation.

STEPS OF EVALUATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

The procedure for evaluating Adult education may be divided, into seven steps:

1. Check the objectives: The first step is to examine the objectives of the activity which is to be evaluated. If these objectives are not stated in a way that the degree of their achievement may be determined, they should be restated so that they can be measured.

2. Examine what was done to reach the objective: This step is important when an attempt is made to evaluate methods of teaching or the course content. It may be omitted (Absent) if the purpose is to evaluate student achievement only. In carrying out this step, it is a good plan to take each objective list in two parallel columns, the material taught and the methods used in teaching that material. What was taught should be listed in detail and in natural sequence in left-hand column. Opposite of each of these items, list of methods used in teaching should be listed in the right hand column.

3. Collect the evidence: Evidence or information is essential to the evaluation of programs, methods and results in the field of adult education. Evidence should be gathered at three different stages:

Before the activity has begun: This shows where the learners were at the start. This can determined later how far they have progressed.

• **While activity is in progress:** It is often desirable to gather evidence after an activity has begun but before it is completed to determine whether the amount and rate of progress is satisfactory/unsatisfactory, or that needs to changes made before more time is wasted.

• **At the end of the activity:** The evidence gathered at the completion of the project should show the extent of the changes made in the students, or the degree to which the predetermined objectives were realized. The evaluator should make a list of the evidence that he/she thinks he/she will need. Each item should be examined and then accepted or rejected according to whether it is in harmony (Synchronization) with these criteria:

– Does it indicate an important change in the behavior of the students?

– Is it clearly a result of the end program?

– Has enough time taken place for the item to have been influenced by the educational programs?

→ Does the item have a direct bearing on the thing to be evaluated?

→ Is its reliability questioned? Is it free from biases, prejudices (Narrowmindedness) and selfish interests?

→ If a sampling procedure is to be used will the sample be truly representative?

4. Sources of evidence: People taught are the most important source of information. If the number of people from whom information is to be gathered is not large, it is best to contact all of them. If the number is very large, it is sometimes advisable to select a sample that represents the whole group.

5. Devices for getting evidence: There are number of devices that can be used according to the nature of the problem. Some of the common devices are:- questionnaire, check-lists, interview schedules etc.

6. Analysis of the evidence: Three kinds of evaluation can be done, informal, semi-formal and formal. Formal evaluation usually requires considerable statistical treatment of data. Informal and Semi-formal evaluation, require only simple processes such as the computations of totals, averages and means, medians, ranges, percentages and distributions. After the facts have been gathered and analyzed, it is necessary to weigh their relative importance. Discard those that do not have any bearing on the problem and those whose reliability is doubtful. In weighing the facts, avoid biases and prejudices. 7. Use of findings: Findings should be used to improve the adult education program in every way that is possible. The findings could be used for:

- program planning, method plans
- talks and discussions at community meetings,
- publish them in the local newspaper,
- educational magazines, incorporate them in annual reports,
- file copy for historical record,
- send copy to state supervisor of adult education and to people in institutions of higher learning who are interested in research in adult education.