

Foreword

Evaluation is not something that people get immediately excited about. Often it is associated with “writing long reports”, “justifying your work to someone else”, “measuring the immeasurable”, “filling out forms and questionnaires”, etc. Boring, tiring, difficult: not exciting at all.

In this T-Kit we want to show you that evaluation can be thrilling, electrifying, stimulating, fun, exciting... or at least attractive and inspiring enough to integrate it into your educational work. Evaluation becomes Educational Evaluation.

Evaluation is something natural

Evaluation is something that is natural for human beings. We do it all the time. We collect information, we process it, we give it a meaning and a value and we act or react according to it. We do it every day when we cross the street, when we buy something, when we talk, when we work, when we move, when we cook and we do it without reports and questionnaires.

So you might ask yourself why should I read a T-Kit on something I already do every day? The answer is to make it conscious, explicit, reflective and organised and to share it with others. Our “everyday evaluation” we do all by ourselves and in our own way. But, from the moment we work together with other people we have to agree on how, when and what we want to evaluate.

Evaluation is like cooking!

Let's get cooking!



Imagine you are having friends over for dinner. You want to prepare them a really nice meal, one that takes you through a nice evening. You decide on the menu you want to serve: four courses starting with a wonderful soup full of vegetables, then pasta with gorgonzola sauce followed by the main dish of chicken in curry sauce accompanied by rice and carrots. For desert you intend to surprise them with your wonderful home made Tiramisu. All this is accompanied by a nice red wine. You go the market in the morning and buy all the ingredients and when you get home you immediately start to prepare. In short: you have a wonderful evening, great discussions, there is a good atmosphere and your friends really liked the food.

Still, looking back there are a few things that could be improved. After the pasta most of your guests were already full and were a bit shocked when you served the chicken curry. And then there was still the Tiramisu waiting for them. Maybe both pasta and soup before the main course is a bit too much? One of your friends turned out to be vegetarian, so for her the main course ended up being only rice and carrots. When again inviting friends for dinner, you resolve to first ask them about any dietary or other special needs they might have. Finally, another friend does not



drink alcohol and the only thing you could offer him was water. Next time, you resolve to buy some non-alcoholic drinks to offer to your guests along with wine.

You did your own evaluation and next time dinner will certainly be better. Probably other things will pop up and you will evaluate those too. You will take them into account for future dinners with friends. You did this 'evaluation' without having a meeting, without questionnaires and you did not write a report you just did it, naturally.

Try to imagine another situation: you like cooking a lot and so does one of your friends. The idea is to start a restaurant. Not immediately but, say, in two years. Until then you want to try things out. Together with your friend you decide to offer "dinner-evenings" for groups of between 6 and 12 people twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sundays.

By doing so you can practice cooking, experiment which with ideas for menus that could eventually be served in the restaurant, find out how the co-operation between the two of you works out, see if there is any way to earn enough for a reasonable living for two people, and so on. Your friend's house has a room, which seems to be perfect for dining and her kitchen is quite good. So, off you go!



And what is one of the first things you do? You start planning the evaluation! That is because you want to "try things out" and to see what the results of your experiment are. You end up in long discussions with your friend about all kinds of things.

What do you want to evaluate?

- the quality of the food
- the satisfaction of the customers
- the variety of the food
- the price and cost of the services offered
- the assortment of drinks you offer
- the atmosphere during the evenings
- the co-operation between you and your friend
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And how do we evaluate these things?

- How do we know the customers like the food? By the tip they leave? Do we give them a questionnaire? Do we count how many people come back?
- When is the atmosphere good? When people leave singing? When everybody is rolling about laughing?
- Do we count costs and benefits every night or should we go for a more long-term approach?

These reflections bring on other questions, like:

- What do we (the two of us) mean by quality food? What is our standard?
- What kind of atmosphere would we like to create?
- When it comes to questions of cost and profit, what would we consider a satisfactory or a good outcome?
- How do we know that people are honest when we ask them if they are satisfied?
- Which aspects of the evaluation results can be used when we go to the bank to ask for assistance in financing our plan to establish a restaurant?
- And many more ...

That is what this T-Kit is all about: planning evaluation, deciding about what you want to get achieve, exploring its educational value, when to do it, with whom, for what and for whom.

