

CIEA 2014

Evaluative strategies in adult education

Marin Manolescu^{a*}, Lucica Magdalena Tâlván^a, Alina Carmen Bozon^a

^aUniversity of Bucharest, 1-3 Iuliu Maniu Avenue, Bucharest, 061071, Romania

Abstract

Structural changes in post-revolutionary Romanian society require affirmation of adult education as a prerequisite for harmonious integration and development on the socio-professional plan. If in the past, the adult education was specific to academic environment, nowadays this educational term covers most social groups as a consequence of the ability of human beings to be educated. It can be said that the process of education occurs during the adult's life, based on their learning needs and in correspondence with the adult's psychological features. In the message Declaration of the First National Conference regarding adult education, Timisoara 2001, it's stated that "it is necessary to recognize adult education as a national priority, as part of the national education system" (Sava, 2001: 194). An important role in adult education is played by the access to the latest information from the social, cultural and professional domains, as a premise for skills development at individual level but also macro-economical level, for the society progress based on knowledge. Learning can be performed in specialized institutions through courses, training programs and/ or e-learning platform which are completed by an official diploma certifying a particular professional qualification. Improving the quality of evaluation trough training programs for adults require the identification of evaluation strategies that highlight correctly the skills acquired by the students. This article aims to identify the main evaluation strategies used in adult education from teacher-trainers' perspective in order to optimize courses' design and development for adults. The paper is structured in four chapters, as follows: the first chapter outlines general characteristics of adult assessment activity. The second chapter presents various conceptual approaches in the literature on assessment strategies used in courses for adults. The third chapter presents the authors contribution to the dynamics of educational policy elements of Romania relating to adult education The fourth chapter highlights the conclusions drawn from the proposed study.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University.

Keywords: evaluation, evaluative strategies, adult education, statistical indicators, higher education;

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +40722 491 839
E-mail address: manole_manolescu@yahoo.com

1. Evaluation in the field of adult education

Teaching-learning-evaluation activity leads to the achievement of the educational process. All these activities are in a relationship of interdependence. From modern didactics perspective evaluation activity is integrated in the educational process.

The concept of evaluation has a series of important definitions both in European and International environment and also in Romanian pedagogy. As far as we are concerned we consider the following assessment of the meaning to the term: the evaluation is the activity through which are issued value judgments about student's learning process and product, based on predetermined quality criteria in order to take decisions according to the meaning given to the evaluation approach: adjustment, improvement, selection, certification, etc. (Manolescu, 2010).

Numerous prestigious specialists in the field of Education Sciences have suggested various definitions of the evaluation concept. Therefore, Hadji (1989: 21) defines the concept of evaluation as follows: "to evaluate could mean: check to judge, to evaluate, to lie, to represent, to cause, to give a verdict, etc." Another well known definition of the evaluation concept is the following: "In school, the evaluation concept has the meaning of a note or a letter grade assigned to pupil's activity "(Abernot, 1998: 5). What we have to remember from these definitions (Manolescu, 2003), is that two fundamental concepts are part of the evaluative process in agreement with the current stage of evaluation development: objectives and assessment criteria.

Regarding adult education, currently there are numerous definitions of this concept, but we'll stop to Hallenbeck's definition (1955 *apud* Popescu, 1974: 19) "adult education is a social movement joining all efforts to educate adults in a large self-conscious movement that can meet the requirement of this century, adults more capable, more balanced and happier". We can talk about a series of characteristics of adult education. Thus, in author Bhola's opinion (1985, *apud* Neculau, 2004: 46) there are five major characteristics of the concept of adult education:

- „Globality and continuity- because adult education has a permanent character being sinonimous with terms like continuous education, community education.
- Indispensable minimum- because all people need a basic education in order to understand the mechanisms of life.
- Structural freedom- offers individuals the opportunity to be educated outside the traditional educational institutions.
- Usefulness- adult education has a functional character and helps the individual to solve their daily problems.
- Equity- because it addresses equally to all”.

In adult education, the evaluation is conducted by a trainer who has some expertise in this area, representing the main topic regarding the training and adult education. To educate adults, the trainer needs to carry on its business in a predetermined space so that the proposed learning activities, leading to the attainment of the objectives set. In higher education, student training involves a laborious process of design and operation of specialized courses for training in a specific area of interest.

2. Evaluation strategies of adults

In a large acception, the strategy represents “a set of coordinating actions in order to reach a goal” (Manolescu, 2010: 51). We can state that in field of adult education the evaluative strategy is a prior and advance guide meant to offers the perspective from which evaluation will be designed, having a key role with regard to issuing value judgments on the process and results of adult training.

“In the educational evaluation, the strategy represents the responsible conduct evaluator demeanor in all aspects and the entire expanse of the evaluative approach, as well as the option for the most appropriate and more suitable type/ mode of teaching evaluation in the given situation of educational” (Ungureanu, 2001: 148).

The strategic approach of an adult evaluation strategies takes into account the following aspects: “establishing the beneficiaries of the evaluation, establishing agents of the evaluation, justification of the evaluation, establishing the goal of the evaluation, make the evaluation compatible intrinsically linked with the type of training, the identification of constraints, determining the object of evaluation, development of assessment tools, optimal

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