

INTERNAL EVALUATION PLAN OF “GeSt” PROJECT

1. INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is the sine qua non of every reform in the educational field and in any other social field. By the term evaluation we mean the systematic examination of events occurring in and consequent on a contemporary program-an examination conducted to assist in improving this program and any other program having the same general purpose (Sechrest & Fingueredo, 1993).

Evaluation may serve various purposes according to the context where it is implemented. It may, for example, be an on-going process which takes place while a program or an intervention is being implemented or it may assess the final affect and the results of an activity. Therefore, having as a criterion the purpose of the evaluation, we can talk about two types of evaluation: a) the formative or process evaluation, which focuses on the assessment of the process of a project· it takes place during the implementation of the program and it aims to detect inadequacies, in order to suggest improvements, and b) the summative or impact evaluation, which focuses on the assessment of the effectiveness of a project· it takes place usually in the end of the project's implementation and it aims to make final evaluation judgements concerning both the implementation process and the final results of the project (Robson, 1993). However, the most recent perspective is that evaluation shouldn't be focused on the process alone or on the results alone, but rather be a systematic part of every step of the implementation a program.

Another distinction of the evaluation process refers to the position of the evaluator in the program. So, there are two types of evaluation: a) internal evaluation, when the evaluators participate in the implementation of the program, and b) external evaluation, when the evaluators are not members of the team that implements the project under evaluation (Ziougou, Dalakoura & Zarifis, 2008).

Usually, internal evaluations are formative or process evaluations, while external evaluations are summative or impact evaluations. However, there could be methodological combinations that allow an enriched approach of the reality of a project (ICF, 2014).

Since the early 60's, numerous models and theoretical approaches have arisen in the evaluation field. Most of those evaluation models set the general principals of the evaluation process, but in practise their use depends strongly on the context and the evaluator. Those evaluation models are categorised into two categories: a) the participatory models, and b) aim-oriented models (Alkin, 1994· Karalis, 1997, 1998). In general, the most recent tendency in the contemporary evaluation theory refers the need of more participatory evaluation procedures, which will put focus on the interests, problems and needs of the participants and the end-users of a project and will feedback the people involved with all the necessary elements for the improving of the project (Worthen, Sanders & Fitzpatrick, 1997).

Scientists agree that the decision about the evaluation plan of a project is the hardest part of the evaluation procedure (Chinapah & Miron, 1990). Is there a perfect plan appropriate for every project?

The question of qualitative versus quantitative research of evaluation -that was topic of conflict among scientists in the field of evaluation study- has been answered. During the last two decades, scientists came to the conclusion that the two methodologies (quantitative and qualitative) are complementary and the best solution is the methodological pluralism (Sechrest & Fingueredo, 1993). They, also, suggested that the focus should be transferred from the technical aspects of the evaluation research to the human aspects, meaning the participants themselves and how they experience the program (Chinapah & Miron, 1990).

This requirement is also set by the scientists that work for the promotion of gender equality from a feminist perspective. The evaluation from this point of view requires from both the evaluator and the participants to declare their own values. The evaluator

should focus on the process of a program and not just on its aims and content (Reinhartz, 1992). As far as methodology is concerned, naturalistic methods that accept aspects of the interaction between researchers and participants as valid information are recommended (Holland & Chisholm, 1987).

2. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC AIMS OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

The main goal of the internal evaluation of the project “*Gender Studies Curriculum: A Step for Democracy and Peace in EU-Neighbouring Countries with Different Traditions/GeSt*”, No. 561785-EPP-1-2015-1-LT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP, is the evaluation of each activity of the project separately and of the project as a whole.

Consequently, the current Work Package 5 “Internal Evaluation” concerns: a) the monitoring and the evaluation of the progress and the products of each activity of the project separately, b) the combined evaluation of the whole project, which will consider and combine all the activities of the project.

More specifically, the evaluation of each action will aim at:

- Assessing the content and the implementation course of all activities in comparison with the declared goals. Also, giving feedback for the improvement to the partners and the coordinator.
- Assessing the products of all activities as far as these factors are concerned: adequacy, quality, appropriateness and utility from the point of view of the participants and the end users.
- Making sure that the quantitative indexes of all activities are met (number of activities, meetings, reports etc., as set in the application form).
- Researching possible changes in the participants' and end-users' thinking, actions and choices.
- Researching participants'/end users' expectations of the changes produced by the project and how those expectations are met.

3. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTS OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

The main objective of the project “GeSt” is the delivery of specific activities-work packages. These work packages as described in the application form of the project are:

WP1. PREPARATION

WP 2. DEVELOPMENT. CURRICULA ON GENDER ISSUES

WP 3. DEVELOPMENT. CORE RESOURCES

WP 4. DEVELOPMENT. E-RESOURCES

WP 5. QUALITY PLAN

WP 6. DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION

WP 7. MANAGEMENT

Consequently, the evaluation study has as its general object the whole project and as special objects each of these activities that will be delivered in its context. More specifically, the specific objects of the evaluation and their specific dimensions are:

Regarding **WP 1 (Preparation)**, objects of study will be:

- to assess the process and successful implementation of all aspects of the WP and, more precisely;
- the development of the survey/analysis of the existing Gender Studies Programmes;
- the products/outcomes of the WP (report and recommendations for the development of new and revised courses);
- the administrative work of all partners as far as these factors are concerned: adequacy, quality, appropriateness and utility;
- the quantitative indexes of the activities (number of curricula analysed);

- the partners' thinking about the co-ordinating and the administrative work of the lead partner.

Regarding **WP 2 (Development. Curricula in gender issues)** objects of study will be:

- the 7 updated curricula of GS;
- the 7 updated existing courses;
- the 7 new courses;
- the 14 syllabi (7 for the new and 7 for the updated courses);
- the reaction of the end-users (students and teaching staff) towards the new and updated courses;
- the partners' thinking about the work of the lead partner.

Regarding **WP 3 (Development. Core resources)** object of study will be:

- the teaching material of GS for students;
- the teaching material of GS for teachers;
- the reaction of students and teaching staff towards the new teaching material;
- the success of internships for teachers in improving teaching skills;
- the partners' thinking about the work of the lead partner.

Regarding **WP 4 (Development. E-resources)**, object of study will be:

- the open educational resources (OER) in GS;
- the new developed e-test system in GS;
- the e-learning methods and control of acquired knowledge, skills and abilities that will be developed in the frame of the E-resources;
- the partners' thinking about the work of the lead partner.

Regarding **WP 5 (Quality plan)** objects of study will be:

- the products of the lead partner as far as these factors are concerned: adequacy, quality, appropriateness and utility (e.g. evaluation reports etc.);

- the partners' thinking about the work of the lead partner;
- the appropriateness of the quality management activity in relation to the goals of the activity and the partners' and end users' needs.

Regarding **WP 6 (Dissemination and exploitation)** objects of study will be:

- the products of the lead partner as far as these factors are concerned: adequacy, quality, appropriateness and utility (dissemination plan, organization of dissemination activities and events);
- the quantitative indexes of the activity (number of the dissemination events and activities);
- partners' thinking about the work of the lead partner;
- the appropriateness of the dissemination activity in relation to the goals of the activity and the partners' and end users' needs;
- all partners' work concerning the dissemination activities and events on a national level.

Regarding **WP 7 (Management)**, object of study will be:

- the content and the delivery of all international meetings according to their declared goals;
- the products of the co-ordinating and the administrative work of the lead partner as far as these factors are concerned: adequacy, quality, appropriateness and utility (e.g. Reports, the VISIBLE site etc.);
- the administrative work of all partners as far as these factors are concerned: adequacy, quality, appropriateness and utility;
- the quantitative indexes of the activities;
- the partners' thinking about the co-ordinating and the administrative work of the lead partner;
- the degree of participants' satisfaction from their participation in the international meetings (concerning, for example, the content, the information

and material distributed, the organisation, the co-ordinator's ability to create a climate of good collaboration etc.).

4. METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

4.1 Evaluation Approach

The decision about the methodology of the evaluation of the project "GeSt" was the result of the consideration of two factors: a) the contemporary theoretical approaches in the field of evaluation and, b) mostly, the context and the specific conditions under which "GeSt" project will be delivered.

As already described in the Introduction, the most recent tendency in the contemporary evaluation theory refers to the need of more participatory evaluation procedures, which will put focus on the interests, problems and needs of the participants and the end-users of a project and will feedback the people involved with all the necessary elements for the improving of the project.

A participatory evaluation like that is of main interest for the partner in charge of the internal evaluation of the project.

However, there are some specific restrictions related to the context of "GeSt" project that make difficult the full realisation of a pure participatory evaluation model. Firstly, "GeSt" project is organised into work packages which are delivered by different partner organisations in different countries. This fact, in combination with the time limitations, leads to a more flexible methodological choice.

More specifically, it has been decided to elaborate an evaluation plan adopting a model that would focus on the participants' needs and expectations and would feedback the project partners, serving as a means for quality assurance of the project, without directly involving the participants in the decisions of the evaluation procedure. At the same time, the model of ex-ante evaluation has been chosen as the most accurate and useful for a number of project actions and products, especially those deriving from

Work Packages 2, 3 and 4 and addressed to the end-users (students and teaching staff).

In conclusion, the type of evaluation that is selected in relation to the special nature of the “GeSt” project is the internal on-going evaluation that will monitor the progress of the project’s activities, in combination with the summative-impact evaluation of the project’s results/products. Furthermore, the wide range of the evaluation procedure of the project demands the division of the general object of the project into special partial objects, which are evaluated separately (partial evaluation). The partial evaluation’s results will be considered for the summative evaluation of the project.

4.2 Methods/techniques of internal evaluation

As far as the methods for collecting the data is concerned, the combined use of quantitative as well as qualitative methods is considered as most appropriate, because the methodological pluralism and the combination of various techniques could produce more effective and useful information that will guarantee the success of the project's goals (Patton, 1986·Sechrest & Sidani, 1995).

Considering the context of “GeSt” project's evaluation –that was described in detail above- and regarding the methodological choices that have already been discussed, the methods that will be used are: a) the monitoring of the quantitative indexes of “GeSt” project's activities, b) the experimental method of measurement in two times for the activities of WPs 2, 3 and 4, i.e. in the beginning and in the end of the their implementation and after the end of any activity for the rest of the WPs, c) the study of the reports regarding all the project's activities (Belling 2016).

In the context of the methodological pluralism that has already been described, the techniques that will be used during the various phases of the project's implementation are: a) questionnaires which will include open-ended and closed questions, b) semi-structured interviews, c) keeping archives of quantitative indexes, e) reports of the different project's activities.

4.3. Internal Evaluation Plan

The elaboration of the evaluation plan includes the actions of preparation and three other levels of action: the implementation actions, the analysis actions and the actions of writing and presenting the evaluation reports. Below, all the actions concerning the on-going evaluation procedures are presented.

4.3.1 The preparation of evaluation instruments

During that phase, all the technical material necessary for the evaluation will be prepared. That material includes the elaboration of the evaluation instruments for the monitoring of the project's activities.

As has already been described, the type of the evaluation chosen enforces qualitative and quantitative methodology.

As far qualitative evaluation is concerned, the technical material that will be used are: a) the written reports of all project's actions, as well as b) the delivery of individual interviews the project partners and the end users (teachers, counsellors).

Concerning the quantitative evaluation, it is essential to create questionnaires that will be addressed to both the project partners and the end users. The statistical analysis of the questionnaires will picture the participants' thinking, expectations, needs and also their possible changes.

Consequently, the main aims of both qualitative and quantitative evaluation are similar. We will now describe the main items of the evaluation instruments for the project partners and the end users.

I. The main items of the evaluation instruments addressed to the project partners

The project partners will be involved in the implementation of all work packages. In addition, some of them are lead partners of each work package, meaning that they are mainly responsible for the delivery of those work packages.

Consequently, the project partners are the main source of information regarding the evaluation of: a) the progress of the different activities, and b) the products of these activities. So, the evaluation instruments (questionnaires) will be structured – always in relation to the declared goals of each activity, in order to research:

- partners' anticipations and satisfaction from their participation in the project;
- partners' needs for the implementation of the activities of the project and if those are fulfilled from the lead partners;
- partners' suggestions for the project to succeed;
- partners' evaluation of each lead partner's work (e.g. products);
- partners' evaluation of their own collaboration with each lead partner;
- partners' suggestions for the improvement of each lead partner's work;
- partners' evaluation of the international meetings.

II. The main items of the evaluation instruments addressed to the end users (e.g. Students, teaching staff and conferences and/or other events participants)

The end users (students, teaching staff and participants of conferences and other events) will participate in the implementation of the new and the revised curricula, will use the teaching material and the e-resources and will participate in the different events of the project. Consequently, the end users are the main source of information regarding the evaluation of: a) the new and revised courses (WP 2), b) the teaching material (WP 3 and 4) and c) the events/activities they will participate in (conferences, internships, international schools). So, the evaluation instruments will be structured –always in relation to the declared goals of each activity- in order to research:

- end users' anticipations and satisfaction from their participation in the project;
- end users' change, regarding their personal understanding of gender studies and in general, as well as on gender issues in the educational field specifically;

- end users' expectations and final satisfaction from their participation in the project as far as its': content, organization, flow of information, materials etc.;
- end users'(teaching staff) needs in their work of gender studies sensitive teaching and research;
- end users' assessment of the new and the revised gender studies courses;
- end users' evaluation of the events they will have participated in.

4.3.2 Evaluation tools

The following evaluation tools will be prepared for the internal evaluation.

- (a) Questionnaires for the partners, in order to evaluate and assess all WPs and project activities, including project meetings.
- (b) Two questionnaires for the end-users (students and teaching staff) involved in the new and the revised courses and using the syllabi, teaching material and e-resources for the ex-ante evaluation process (one before and one after the end of the courses).
- (c) Questionnaire for the end-users, participants of conferences and other activities and events (international schools and internships) (to be administrated after the end of each event).
- (d) Interview guide for interviewing the organizers of the different events (conferences, international schools and internships).
- (e) Interview guide for interviewing the WP leaders and their teams.

4.3.3 Implementation of the evaluation

Evaluation data will be collected as following:

- (a) Data for the evaluation of all WPs concerning project partners will be collected twice, at the middle and the end of the project. Project meetings will be evaluated at the end of every meeting.
- (b) Data for the evaluation of the events (conferences, International Partnerships,

International Schools) concerning project partners and end users, will be collected during or after the end of the event.

- (c) Data for the evaluation of WPs 1, 2, 3 and 4 concerning the end-users will be collected in two phases, at the beginning and at the end of the revised and new courses of GS.

4.3.4 Analysis of the evaluation data

The collection process of evaluation data, which was described earlier, imposes the analysis on two levels:

- on the first level the data will be coded, and
- on the second level, the evaluation data will be analysed using all the proper methods according to their type (quantitative/qualitative).

4.3.5 Reporting

Two Evaluation Reports will be submitted:

- (a) the Interim Evaluation Report that will be submitted for the purposes of the first project reporting phase,
- (b) the final Evaluation Report will be submitted at the end of the project, for the purposes of the final reporting phase.

5. REFERENCES

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