

## **Five:**

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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Evaluation is an integral part of every process in education. In addition, as already described, the entire mPPACT programme has followed Bruner's spiral model, a process and multi-dimensional movement that pre-required evaluation. Through the evaluative process, the two-dimensional model became a spiral and gained depth, by the use of continual reflection and redefinition.

### **Internal and external evaluation methodology**

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) was adopted as a method for mPPACT. PM&E is not only a methodology but also a philosophy for evaluation. It is based on the assumption that evaluation is best serviced by the participants themselves, rather than an outsider, an unknown expert, who will bring ready-made questionnaires and collect quantitative data. This model is now in common use, from major World Bank initiatives on-the-ground in the South to the smallest community-based development initiatives all over the world. However, the basis of this philosophy can be

relevant in any project-type situation. It is more a method of project management and evaluation through a collaborative problem solving and generation of knowledge. It presupposes that everyone will be involved in all stages and steps of this process.

For mPPACT the PM&E system holds true for both programme evaluation and -more importantly - for evaluation and monitoring of the course itself - trainers, teachers, pupils. As co-intentionality was an important value and one of the main goals of the mPPACT process, participation by all stakeholders in as much of the process as possible (decision-making, organising, monitoring, reflecting, evaluating) was significant.

To make this happen and to ensure the penetration through to all levels of activity, an internal evaluator and 'critical friend' was appointed in order to organise and manage the evaluation in all countries involved in the project, given the number of participating institutions and people of different nations that were involved. The internal evaluator was responsible for organising the process of evaluation, create and translate the assessment tools, suggest questions, create circumstances for in-depth discussions and interviews, collate the data received and facilitate the process of reflection, always in co-operation and agreement with the participants and partners. One of the roles undertaken during this process was to examine assumptions about the project and its progress and to face up to contradictions and conflicts that could emerge. This process was important in order for the spiral model to be accomplished. (An external evaluation was also scheduled/arranged in order to verify the results and monitor the process from a different angle.)

### **During the course:**

In order to determine the success of the mPPACT Course (and therefore the programme too) the course evaluation focuses on four areas, exploring both quantitative and qualitative information – facts as well as impressions – and based on



the objectives outlined earlier in this book.

1. The course participants
  - a. Does the course help them to develop an integrated arts-based approach to teaching?
  - b. Does it foster their ability to revive pupils' motivation to learn?
  - c. Does it help them to develop new practices and a synergy between pupil and teacher?
  - d. Does it help them to develop an alternative classroom strategy to achieve a critical understanding of relevant social issues?
  - e. Has the course fostered or provided documentation and supporting materials?
2. Their pupils
  - a. Was there an impact on the teachers that emerged or was evident in the performative outcome of the pupils at the mPPACT event?

## How this is done:

One of the techniques that were suggested in the project proposal, alongside more conventional tools, was the Most Significant Change technique (**MSC**). This is a qualitative monitoring tool used to monitor and evaluate projects from the start to the finish. It is designed to collect stories of significant change. It uses stories that provide insight into what people value, and illustrate the way in which individuals make sense of situations. The MSC approach is a useful tool for evaluating education programmes, as conventional monitoring and evaluation tools often do not provide sufficient data to demonstrate programme impacts.<sup>41</sup> It is suggested that MSC is suited to monitoring that focuses on **learning** rather than just accountability and is also an appropriate tool when the interest is focused on the **effect** of the intervention on people's lives.

Stories therefore were collected in all countries and through all cycles of mPPACT programme. Teachers, pupils and partners and trainers were given opportunities to remember, write, and describe important instances during the process of the cycle, be it the training, the application, the final

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<sup>41</sup> (Davies, 2005.)

event or even after the end of mPPACT application. The collection of stories of course suffuses the drama process, so narratives that emerge through the improvisations especially - since they also embody the other-than-conscious mind<sup>42</sup> - and through any presented scene are included in this 'collection'.

In the countries that completed the cycle in the early years of the project (Greece and Cyprus) there were opportunities for meeting the participants after an amount of time had passed and therefore reflecting on the process and its impact on their lives and their pupils' lives. This process will continue during each course delivery and throughout the life of the programme.

Closer to the conventions of PM&E, although more physically based than its parent, there is extensive use of exercises drawn from Participatory Learning and Action (PLA),<sup>43</sup> which was developed at the Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex, UK).

A variety of other evaluation tools are used, from different methodological approaches, in order to ensure – to double-check whether conclusions have been soundly drawn. Similar questions were explored through quantitative and qualitative methodological tools; for example, questionnaires, group discussions and action-based evaluation.

An essential experience from the Danish circle was about the mPPACT methodology as an inclusive praxis. One of the participating Danish schools was a school for children and young people with severe disabilities. These children learned new communication skills by working with mPPACT methodology.

They created and performed a play about their own community and friendships. When they performed this for other children, their play had a big impact on the way the other participating children imagined how disabled children are as persons, and what they are able to do.

Afterwards a group of non-disabled children told their teacher that they felt embarrassed about how they have talked about disabled people before they experienced how they contributed to the event. The experience caused a transformation of how they saw themselves relating to people with different assumptions than their own.

From this it was evident to the teachers that mPPACT is a teaching approach that can bring people with different backgrounds together, to communicate and share experiences. And this is true whether we talk about differences of age, race, cultural background or human disabilities.

<sup>42</sup> (Mavrocordatos, 2006.)

<sup>43</sup> (*Journal of Participatory Learning in Action*, n.d.)

So there is a range of ways to monitor the proceedings and from that to draw evaluative conclusions. These are a few suggestions, with some more detailed notes below.

1. Semi-structured interviews with individual and groups of teachers as well as pupils
2. Questionnaires for teachers and partners/trainers with closed and open-ended questions
3. Observation notes (by partners and trainers)
4. Reflection notes (by partners after each phase and teachers during training and application)
5. Personal journals (by teachers during application of methodology in schools)
6. Pupils' journals, blog entries, etc
7. Comments written or scrawled on a (paper) graffiti wall (provided either spontaneously or in response to facilitators' questions)
8. Videotaping and photographing (during seminars, lessons, mPPACT event)
9. Action-based evaluation (e.g. still pictures followed by discussions)
10. Group discussions (following on any of the above)

### **A note on action-based evaluation:**



More information on PLA can be found online through the *Journal of Participatory Learning in Action*,<sup>44</sup> as well as numerous publications on the subject from the Institute of Development Studies. To some extent they have softened the quantitative/qualitative dichotomy in evaluation praxis and discourse.

Mostly, the exercises

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

are sculptural and graphic, but many can also be adapted to a performative framework. Two of these at least have been and continue to be key to the mPPACT monitoring process. In our usage they remain qualitative. As such, therefore, their results are open to interpretation, though the discussion that they generate can open depths which would not have been plumbed with questionnaire or formal interview. This is why we insist, as PLA practitioners would also insist, on the triangulation: the comparison of data from different evaluation exercises, already mentioned above.

## **Still pictures:**

The basic language for much of this is provided by the 'still pictures' much described in the 'Exercises' section (part three of the book). Just as still pictures can be used to explore attitudes and issues of a social nature, they can also be used to express, depict and explore evaluative questions.

The mPPACT Course begins with an exploration of what pupil-centred approaches might mean, what they are compared with, what the current situation is in education and why we need to develop a new role for the teacher. By inviting groups of participants to depict their perceptions, we open an active and visual debate and also gain base-line data. So that when at the end of the course we might ask for a fresh set of still pictures on these topics – we should get a different picture.

A very standard action research evaluation task is the SWOT analysis. Participants are asked to rate the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities offered, **T**hreats encountered in relation to a given situation or project. These can all be illustrated, with more fun especially in a classroom, by physical depictions. Often the exercise can be simplified to depicting the good side / bad side of a situation.

Still pictures are clearly more appropriate to a classroom situation than a questionnaire, verbal or written. And, as has already been mentioned, it is often the discussion provoked by a picture, or changes made to it by others, rather than the picture itself, that reveals the information or 'data'.

## **The Margolis wheel:**

This is a chance, before the participants disperse for each one to become

a consultant and advise the others. The exercise is described in the Trainers' guide for PLA, citing the original exercise by Alan Margolis:<sup>45</sup>

An intense and good experience to come near the end. This enables participants to share and receive advice on real problems and opportunities. It reinforces solidarity and mutual support. It can also surprise people with their own ability to counsel others.

You need four-six pairs of chairs, facing each other, arranged in a circle. As many circles of pairs of chairs as fit the number taking part. Allow ten minutes for briefing and reflection, plus:

- 4 pairs of chairs – 25-30 minutes
- 5 pairs of chairs – 30-35 minutes
- 6 pairs of chairs – 35-40 minutes

1. Ask participants to reflect and choose a problem or opportunity they face or will face. This can be in their work and/or when they return to their institutions, or be any personal problem on which they would like advice. Stress that everything that passes is in confidence between friends.



2. Ask everyone to sit in a chair, any chair. Those on the inner ring are counsellors, and those on the outer ring their clients. There are three minutes only for each round of advice, roughly one minute for posing the problem, and two minutes for the advice.
3. After two minutes, warn that only one minute is left. After three minutes, all the outer ring (clients) move one seat in the same direction. The inner ring (counsellors) stays put. Repeat the procedure.

<sup>45</sup> (Pretty, J; Guijt, I; Thompson, J; Scoones, I., 1995.)

4. When the outer ring has gone round, counsellors and clients swap seats. The process is repeated with the roles changed.

## Tips and Options

- Encourage note-taking, otherwise much will be forgotten. Notes can be taken on the run, or two minutes or so can be set aside at the end of each full circuit for making a personal record.
- It may be wise to place people from the same organisation or department into different clusters of chairs.
- If numbers do not fit, facilitators can take part, or volunteers can sit out and observe, or an extra pair of chairs can be added to one or more circles (in which case stop the bigger circles when the smaller circles have finished their round).
- Write down the times when change-overs must take place. (Otherwise it is easy to mess up the timing).

## Group Mapping

This is the most qualitative of all our exercises and generally great fun to do when we have the opportunity to run a full mPPACT event (with all participants and their pupils present). It may be introduced at the end of the course, before moving out into the application of mPPACT in the field, as part of the base-line collection of impressions as



to attitudes, pre-conceptions and expectations of the course. At this point it is likely to be a small group, but familiar with one another and well bonded.

The exercise works like this:

The group is invited to look around them and identify some objects that remind them of the week they have just shared. In silence and spontaneously they then place one or some of these objects together in the centre of the space, so as to form a sculpture that is accepted as representative or symbolic of the notion of 'mPPACT'.

If music has formed part of the performative work of the course, then that music may be introduced at this point to fill out the ambience. One by one the group then begins to circulate, concentrating on the central 'totem', considering their position – do they embrace it, do they understand it, do they like it, will it be useful to them? Slowly they begin to take up a position, frozen (still image again), that shows their relation to it and also their relation to the others in the group – how near, how far, in what position.

This may take some time, but when the facilitator senses the correct moment [s]he calls for people to take their final poses. Hopefully this should all be recorded on still or video.

The facilitator may then walk around and tap participants on the shoulder with the instruction for them to speak some inner thoughts. They may be asked to complete the sentence: "In this position I feel ...", or "From here I need to ...", or "What I need is ...".

They may be asked to go quickly to the position they were in when they first did the exercise (or first encountered mPPACT) – for reasons of comparison, or perhaps they could be prompted to go where they would like to be. From here they could be asked to complete the sentence, "What I need to do to get here is ...."

All this is qualitative food for analysis. The general tone, energy and creativity of the exercise – a kind of group dance as well as a map of the general 'feeling' – gives an impression of group coherence as well as endorsing the spirit of *Communitas*.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Communitas* is an intense community spirit, the feeling of great social equality, solidarity, and togetherness. *Communitas* is characteristic of people experiencing liminality together. [..... .. ] *Communitas* is an acute point of community. It takes community to the next level and allows the whole of the community to share a common experience, usually through a rite of passage. This brings everyone onto an equal level; even if you are higher in position, you have been lower and you know what that is.