These are two elements in which we constantly fail owing to the intensity and multiplicity of our work. It is something for which we never find the necessary time. How many times have we met colleagues who have considerable work experience attained over many years, but who have never been able to assess or systematise it. In this way they have allowed others to fall into the same errors and have not allowed others to learn from their advances.

In the Alforja coordinated programme we have always believed that only continuous evaluation and the systematisation of our experiences would give us the answer to many concerns, and we have therefore dedicated particular attention to these aspects. We present below some of the ideas that have occurred to us collectively regarding how to approach these two elements.

a) Evaluation
We must consider evaluation as an educational fact, and not only as an isolated activity which is the exclusive responsibility of educators. Evaluation should allow all the participants on a programme to collectively take ownership of their results.

-What do we evaluate? (or what should we evaluate)
  • The fulfilment of the objectives that we have set for ourselves (specific and general).
  • The transforming impact on specific reality of our training programmes, not only of the internal results of the workshop or reflection day held.
  • The level of assimilation of the programme content.
  • The degree of ownership of the methodology.
  • The manner in which the topics are developed: techniques and procedures.
  • The selection, adaptation and implementation of materials (both supporting materials for the workshop, and for the reproductions, if applicable).
  • The level of depth achieved (whether or not more was possible).
  • The role of coordination.
  • The organisational and logistic aspects.

-Why do we evaluate?
  • To adapt and progress in the practice of our experiences, seeking to correct errors and thus achieve greater efficiency.
  • To verify the correspondence between the educational programmes and the requirements of the organisations or communities with which we work.
  • To verify the level of simulation of the contents and/or methodology.
  • To obtain the opinion of the participants.
  • To adapt the topics to the needs of the participants, during the course of the workshop.

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1 CEP Alforja, San José, Costa Rica. This article was published the same year as a chapter of the leaflet “Los desafíos de la Educación Popular”, pub. Alforja, San José, 1984; and pub. Tarea, Lima, 1986.
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- To strengthen, by means of the evaluation, ownership of the content and methodology.
- To improve the methods and techniques of evaluation.
- What should be the characteristics of evaluation?
  - It should be both individual and collective.
  - It should be and allow criticism and self-criticism.
  - It should be participative and serve not only as information for the coordinators but as a process of recapitulation and retaking of ownership by the group of participants.
  - It should be permanent (during the programme, upon completion and in monitoring).
  - It should deal not only with those aspects considered important for evaluation by the coordinators, but also those desired by the participants.
  - It should be simple, clear, agile, practical and appropriate.
  - It should provide specific clues for monitoring or future work.
  - It should be not only descriptive (quantitative), but also analytical (qualitative).
- Take into account that it is not neutral, but depends upon the overall interests of popular education owing to which there is a political criterion that guides the evaluation process (the real effects of the work on the popular movement).

b) Systematisation

- What is systematisation?
  - Systematisation is a critical look at our experiences and processes, identifying constants. In this respect, it means an ordering and interpretation of our experiences seen as a whole, and the role or function of each particular activity within this whole.
  - Systematisation is a level of reflection higher than evaluation although it is supported by it. It is more long-term than evaluation.
  - Systematisation is not only the compiling of data, but an initial theorisation regarding experiences, it is what questions them, situates them, relates them to each other allowing a more in-depth analysis in terms of continuity.

- Why systematise?
  - Due to the type of methodology that we implement, which is not a finished product and has to be fine-tuned in practice. It allows us to measure the creativity and advances that have taken place.
  - To seek efficiency of work, calibrating the quality of the methodology, the topics dealt with, the participants, etc. and this continuously optimises our work. It is like a pause in the educational work.

- What should we systematise?
  - The design and performance of the training programmes; the efficiency and use of techniques; the role of coordination of the workshops; the practical results that have been obtained with the application of the methodology.
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- The process experienced by a group of educators; the contributions provided by the experience of other colleagues; the advances achieved; the defects and limitations that seem to be constant and which we still carry with us.

- **How should we systematise?**
  - In a workshop, by means of a control group (“a sharp eye”), to watch its development critically.
  - Via the review of partial evaluations and the monitoring plans.
  - Via the records of each activity:
    - These should be descriptive, narrative and interpretative.
    - They should be critical, brief, orderly, readable, appropriate and succeed in summing up the reflection of the group.
    - They should include the living language of the participants.
    - They should include each stage of the programme, to allow the recreation of this process by the participants.
    - They should be useful to both the participants and the educators.
    - In accordance with the level of methodological training of the participants they should be more descriptive (regarding procedure, techniques, etc.) or more analytical (results, conclusions, interpretation of the process, etc.).
    - Their preparation should be included in the planning of the workshop or training day.
    - Records are the foundation for systematisation, because they include the experience as it was lived and are not left to memory alone. Subsequently, when we review them all together they allow us to see the advances, variations, constants, etc.
    - They may have different characteristics, according to the use that is to be given to them (such as direct support for the reproduction of the topic, as a base for systematisation, as an element to recreate the experience, etc.).
    - In the case of first level methodology workshops, it would be more convenient for the record to include the techniques with their game rules and their procedure instead of narrating how their development took place in the workshop, in order for the participants to apply them creatively and not be tied to one form.