

The  
of Adult **E**valuation  
Education Staff

EDUEVAL Handbook

Extended Version

edited by  
EDUEVAL Consortium





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# Towards the definition of the professional profile of the evaluator of adult education staff

by Loredana Perla and Viviana Vinci<sup>3</sup>

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## 1.1 A preliminary statement: beyond the evaluating function, towards a new professional profile

Reflecting on the *professional profile* entails, beyond the specific field where the professional operates, clearly focusing on and defining a number of elements, such as the role played, the contexts of work, the areas and sectors of relevance, the type of users of reference, the knowledge, skills and competences necessary for the profession and the professional ethical principles inspiring professional action.

The international debate on the skill profiles of educational work has highlighted the complexity of being able to reach a complete model of the procedures and methods of evaluation on this subject (Research voor Beleid, 2010, Carlsen & Irons, 2003; Jäger & Irons, 2006; Jarvis, 2009). Evaluating educational work requires a view that can penetrate the density of the processes implemented in various contexts. The very expression of *educational work* is in itself difficult to be defined and delimited as it concerns different targets and an action that takes place in varying contexts and for different purposes.

The evaluator of Adult Education (AE) staff therefore rep-

3 Loredana Perla is the author of the sub-sections 1.1, Viviana Vinci is the author of the sub-section 1.1.1.

resents a *new* professional figure for a *function* which, actually, it is not: it has been performed for some time, through heterogeneous practices and professionals which change depending on the context and, to a considerable extent, on the different European country.

The evaluation of educational work, as the EDUEVAL<sup>4</sup> research results have shown, is mainly performed in two ways:

- either through ‘officially recognized’ evaluators, i.e. *professional evaluators* or certifiers of the quality of personnel belonging to bodies outside the organization, who evaluate the conformity with pre-established standards and who do not necessarily have in-depth knowledge of the educational context and of the complexity of the work processes and dynamics of the staff operating in it;
- or through ‘unofficially recognized’ evaluators, i.e. professionals from different training and professional backgrounds, with experience in the field of education and who mainly have roles of coordination (trainers, supervisors, consultants, experts). Unlike the professional evaluators of the previous point, they certainly have a wide knowledge of the contexts of adult education. However, they do not necessarily have specific training for evaluation: evaluating the staff often takes place, in this second way, through strategies which are not highly standardized and informal tools or ones which have been built up inside the work group.

There is, therefore, an *evaluating function* which is carried

4 See the *EDUEVAL Public Research Report*, available at: [http://www.edueval.eu/download/pdf/2.2\\_Public\\_Research\\_Report.pdf](http://www.edueval.eu/download/pdf/2.2_Public_Research_Report.pdf).



out in a very different way depending on the professional contexts and the different European countries, oscillating between external certification and practices which are not officially recognized.

### 1.1.1 *The multiple competences of the evaluator: a single profession or a mix of different professionalisms?*

From surveys of the scientific contributions on the training/profile of the *evaluator* (Wilcox, King, 2014; King, Stevahn, 2015; Russ-Eft et al., 2008; Stevahn et al., 2005; Mertens, 1994; Torres, Preskill, & Piontek, 1996; Altschuld & Engle, 1994; Phillips, 1997; Brinkerhoff et al., 1983; Caron, 1993; Balotta, Righetti, Turbati & Caropreso, 2013) and from an analysis of the work on the *professional standards* of the evaluators, carried out by the most influential European and American societies of evaluation, some elements have been used in order to orient the definition of the *EDUEVAL profile of the AE staff evaluator*. The first element concerns the complexity of reaching a model for the professional profile of evaluator, starting from the absence of a univocal definition of the evaluator's competences.

Faced with a mix of recommendations and suggestions collected from guidelines and standards for evaluators focused, in particular, on professional ethical principles and on the ethics of evaluation, including rules of conduct and the values inspiring action, the professional competences of the evaluator are stated in a fairly general way. Those described refer to *families* of different co-existing competences: those related to the policies, to the programmes and to the projects to be evaluated; those relative to the specific sector in which the programme to be evaluated is included; competences relative to the evaluating research methodology; competences relative to group management and, lastly, communication and multi-

disciplinary cultural skills. These all contribute jointly to defining the professional expertise.

A second recurring element in the description of the profile of the evaluator is the combination of skills closely related to the context of evaluation with inter-personal skills, common to the profile of the evaluator and other *practices of consulting and care of individuals*, therefore counselling, training and supervision: for example empathic, listening and inter-personal skills with users, clients and stakeholders. Another association that emerges concerns the profile of the evaluator and that of the *researcher*, who both have in common multiple and flexible skills which include the ability to choose, adapt and conceive of models and methodologies of evaluation depending on the context, the users and the resources available. At stake there is a dimension of interpreting, reading, listening to and understanding the context and the processes enacted, which leads both the evaluator and the researcher to constantly *put their judgement to the test*, to continuously negotiate their interpretations and a continuous professional updating which never comes to an end<sup>5</sup>.

- 5 The point of the question could appear to be summarized in a *provocative* question which started the reflection of a work group in Italy on the figure of the evaluator (cf. “Profession Project” edited by Daniela Oliva, Riepilogo 21 gennaio 2008; cf. activity of the AIV group, <http://www.valutazioneitaliana.it>): *Is the evaluator a professional or a figure who has developed a series of competences which have come into being in different professions (trainer, psychologist, consultant, sociologist, researcher etc.)?*

This question has led to the reflection by the Italian AIV work group over the years to defining not an individual professional profile of the evaluator but no fewer than four clearly distinct profiles. They talk of the *methodologist* of evaluation, or *coordinator* or “manager” of evaluation. There is also the *sector expert* or the *technician of evaluation*. Thus, it is not only about an “evaluator” but rather a “team of evaluation” as

As Balotta, Righetti, Turbati & Caropreso (2013) effectively emphasize:

“on the one hand there is a tool box and on the other there is a process which has its own specificities and characteristics: the capacity to control both these aspects and above all the possibility of balancing the ability to evaluate with knowledge of the intrinsic characteristics of the process in action, become the point of excellence where the distinction between good evaluators and mere technicians of evaluation can be made. This is where an important part of “good evaluation” is played out and those with the responsibility of “training evaluators” ask themselves questions about this specific topic” (p. 275).

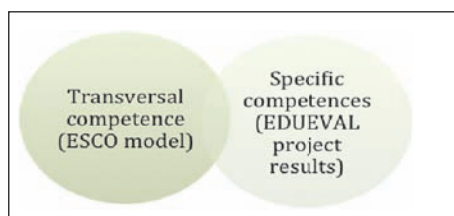
In the study of the profile of the evaluator of AE staff and in designing the current training model (cf. *EDUEVAL Curriculum, vol. 1*, and *EDUEVAL How to do Guide, vol. 2*), the theoretical frame which considered the competence of educational work as a “complex form of action through which the tasks and projects characterizing it are carried out” was taken into consideration (Harré, 2000, p. 74). The work of defining the Curriculum also received the extensive contribution offered, from the 1980s, by research on what are known as *transversal skills* (Rey, 1996) – such as, for example, problem-solving, management of group work, creativity, inter-personal skills, coping strategies in anxiogenic situations

through different professional skills it is possible to combine the double expertise, the technical/evaluation one with that relative to the specificities of the context which is the object of evaluation (in our case, adult education).

– which are essential in building up the profile of the evaluator of educational work and, therefore, at the basis of curricula the training path.

This work of immersion and recognition of works on the evaluator profile has allowed building up a detailed picture to use as a starting point, to bring into focus the complex identity and the heterogeneous competences of the evaluator of AE staff.

Lastly, the classification proposed by the ESCO model was taken into consideration in designing the Curriculum. Therefore, the profile of the evaluator of AE staff can be defined using both the transversal competences of the ESCO model and the specific competences identified from the results of the EDUEVAL project.



### Profile of the AE staff evaluator

<b>EDUEVAL profile of the evaluator of adult education staff</b>	
<i>Who s/he is and the roles s/he holds</i>	The evaluation of AE staff is a high level professional who operates in adult education, using specific evaluation methods and tools aimed at improving the educational work of the staff. The roles of the evaluator in adult education contexts are multiple and include – as well as those more specifically on evaluation – others of management, training and coordination such as management of the service, staff training, selection of human resources, supervision, inspection and consulting.

<p><i>What s/he does – activities, methods and tools</i></p>	<p>The professional activities of the evaluator of AE staff include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- planning, implementing and managing the evaluation of the educational and training actions of the staff operating in AE services;</li> <li>- building up plans and tools of evaluation and self-evaluation;</li> <li>- collecting, analysing and interpreting data;</li> <li>- documenting and communicating the results of the evaluation;</li> <li>- accompanying and planning follow-up actions and redesigning the educational work of AE staff;</li> <li>- supporting collaboration of the staff with the local area and the interlocutors/stakeholders involved in various capacities in the evaluation processes of the AE services.</li> </ul> <p>The evaluator of AE staff uses qualitative and quantitative methods and tools to carry out these activities. Those which must be mastered in particular for the evaluation of the staff – according to the triangulated EDUEVAL model (cf. sections below) – are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- methods and tools of observation, checklists and evaluation rubrics;</li> <li>- methods and tools for recording quantitative data such as surveys and questionnaires;</li> <li>- methods and tools for recording qualitative data, used in the evaluation and self-evaluation activities, promoting the group dimension (the object of evaluation is the staff, not the individual operator), including focus groups, case studies, brainstorming, portfolios, audits and professional/documentary writing by the staff.</li> </ul> <p>It is also important for the evaluator of AE staff to have knowledge about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- quality certification standards and systems;</li> <li>- legislation on the adult education services where s/he is to operate;</li> <li>- the specific characteristics of the context, the object of evaluation and of the services it networks with in the local area;</li> <li>- theories, models and meanings of evaluation;</li> <li>- leadership and how to manage a group and conflicts</li> <li>- communication, interpersonal, organizational and institutional processes, which underpin the evaluation of AE staff.</li> </ul>
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<p><i>Where s/he operates (in which services)</i></p>	<p>The evaluator of AE staff operates in different areas of the social sector, including education, cultural development, mental health, family, social and legal, vocational training, community development and prevention, carrying out activity in multiple services aimed to promote adult educational care and education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- education, literacy and second chance services;</li> <li>- intercultural integration services;</li> <li>- services for drug addicts;</li> <li>- services for the disabled;</li> <li>- mental health services;</li> <li>- prison services;</li> <li>- parent/family services;</li> <li>- services for the promotion of cultural activities;</li> <li>- services promoting prevention;</li> <li>- personal care services.</li> </ul> <p>The evaluator of AE staff must have specific and transversal knowledge, skills and competences – didactic, educational, methodological, doximological, psychological and sociological – at the same time, which allow the evaluator to act with rigour, autonomy and professional awareness in multiple situations and contexts.</p>
<p><i>With which users s/he works</i></p>	<p>The evaluator of AE staff works with the staff that operate in adult education, therefore mainly with groups of teachers, educators, trainers and operators who, in various ways, operate in the services mentioned above. The users of reference, therefore, do not concern the individual operators or the users directly (who are at the <i>first level</i> of services and educational bodies/institutions – in this case, adults –) but the staff, the work groups who are at the <i>second level</i>.</p>
<p><i>Professional ethical principles</i></p>	<p>The professional action of the evaluator of AE staff must be guided by deep professional ethical principles, that can guarantee transparency, impartiality and rigour in the evaluation processes, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- integrity, coherence, respect, responsibility, emotive balance and self-awareness, open-mindedness, social conscience (<i>ethical attitudes</i>, cf. <i>EDUEVAL Guidelines</i>);</li> <li>- knowledge of the cultural framework of evaluation, transparency, respect of privacy (<i>professional ethics: principles and advice</i>, <i>ibid.</i>);</li> <li>- ensuring the whole evaluation process, providing clear indicators, creating trust, interpreting the explicit and implicit dynamics, providing effective feedback (<i>competences and skills</i>, <i>ibid.</i>);</li> <li>- taking into consideration the complexity of evaluation, interpreting the context promoting organization and professional well-being, taking into consideration the local area and external interlocutors (<i>political and social aims</i>, <i>ibid.</i>);</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- paying attention to the risks linked with roles that are not clearly defined, misunderstandings, manipulation and influence of one's personal background (<i>risks to manage, ibid.</i>).</li> </ul>
<i>Training and professional paths</i>	<p>The training of the evaluator of AE staff must meet two areas of competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a basic one, following an educational qualification, as required by the regulations of the national context</li> <li>- a specialized one, on evaluation.</li> </ul> <p>In addition to specific training, a compulsory requisite for practising the profession of the evaluator of AE staff is having substantial professional experience in the field of adult education, both in the roles of educator/operator and in second level roles, i.e. of staff coordination.</p>
<i>Specific professional competences</i>	<p><i>Being able to analyse the context and the demand for evaluation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- collecting information on the context of adult education;</li> <li>- consulting documents of the service or body/institution (charter of services, documentation etc.);</li> <li>- consulting direct (operators of the service and/or body/institutions) and indirect (stakeholders) witnesses;</li> <li>- observing the context;</li> <li>- identifying the specificities, constraints and resources of the context;</li> <li>- studying the feasibility and sustainability of the evaluation process;</li> <li>- using mixed strategies (listening, conducting groups, exploring representations) to support the operators in clarifying a demand for evaluation (optimization of work processes, well-being of the staff, improvement of the internal dynamics of the organizations, communication with the stakeholders etc.);</li> <li>- understanding the implicit and explicit expectations of the staff and of the organization;</li> <li>- working out interpretative hypotheses of the need expressed by users.</li> </ul> <p><i>Being able to plan the evaluation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- collecting bibliographic or research material as a support for planning the evaluation;</li> <li>- collecting all the data that has emerged from the exploratory phase and hypothesizing the evaluation questions;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- selecting theoretical models and tools, approaches and tools to be used coherently with the specificities of the context and the data collected;</li> <li>- designing an evaluation plan, identifying the resources necessary and estimating the costs;</li> <li>- indicating the objectives and the results expected of the evaluation;</li> <li>- organizing the phases of work and a time schedule for the activities;</li> <li>- building up evaluation devices using techniques and tools that are already known or adapting them specifically to the context;</li> <li>- identifying any risks, times for monitoring and redesigning one's work.</li> </ul> <p><i>Being able to collect, analyse and interpret the data of the evaluation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- applying the methodologies, techniques and tools included in the evaluation plan in the context;</li> <li>- collecting the data that emerged from applying the data collection devices;</li> <li>- triangulating the data obtained with different strategies;</li> <li>- mixing different data analysis techniques;</li> <li>- leading the staff by assigning tasks and defining roles and leadership to the members of staff in the evaluation and self-evaluation processes;</li> <li>- supporting the operators of the staff in the different phases of the evaluation and self-evaluation process;</li> <li>- identifying any criticalities and making modifications;</li> <li>- interpreting the data of the evaluation.</li> </ul>
	<p><i>Documentation and communication of the evaluation report</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- preparing a report on the outcome of the evaluation process;</li> <li>- communicating the outcomes of the evaluation report to the staff;</li> <li>- using different and contextualized methods of documentation, languages and styles of presentation with respect to the specificity of the context;</li> <li>- identifying the findings that have emerged from the report and motivating them;</li> <li>- negotiating interpretations emerging from the report with the staff;</li> <li>- remaining in communication with the client/organization;</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- managing and containing any dysfunctional dynamics and internal conflict in the staff, after returning the results of the evaluation report.</li> </ul> <p><i>Follow-up and implementing the evaluation plan</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- communicating with stakeholders and local area networks;</li> <li>- preparing recommendations and plans for the improvement of the processes which have been evaluated;</li> <li>- providing suggestions for the autonomous use of self-evaluation tools by the staff.</li> </ul> <p><i>Management of the evaluation process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- monitoring the evaluation plan;</li> <li>- evaluating one's own work;</li> <li>- observing ethical principles and guidelines* for evaluators.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Transversal competences selected by ESCO</i></p>	<p><i>1. Application of knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Numeracy skills</li> <li>1.2 Information and communication</li> <li>1.3 Health, safety and the workplace environment</li> </ul> <p><i>2. Attitudes and values at work</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Attitudes</li> <li>2.2 Values</li> </ul> <p><i>3. Social skills</i></p> <p><i>4. Thinking skills</i></p> <p><i>5. Language and communication</i></p>

The profile of the evaluator of adult education staff is thus very complex. This figure has to have specific knowledge on evaluation (models and theories, methods, procedures, stan-

\* See the *EDUEVAL Guidelines* available at: [http://www.edueval.eu/download/pdf/brochure\\_guidelines\\_def.pdf](http://www.edueval.eu/download/pdf/brochure_guidelines_def.pdf)

dards and indicators, tools), the contexts of adult education (legislation, users, local areas) and educational work with adults (characteristics, specificities, structure, dynamics). Above all, the evaluator must be able to translate this knowledge into competent action which, whilst respecting a particular ethic, can increase the level of awareness of adult education staff on the educational work done in their particular contexts. This effectively seems the condition to promote the development of adult education staff and consequently the services of adult education. The evaluation model developed by EDUEVAL highlights the areas in which the evaluator must have full expertise