

EVALUATION

It has already been suggested that one of the main purposes of following-up an in-service programme is to provide reliable feed-back on the adequacy of the programme itself, thus providing guidelines for future course planning. It would seem that, in practice, evaluation is frequently no more than an incidental by-product of an informal process of follow-up, often carried out by staff who have not necessarily had first-hand experience of the in-service programme itself.

However, where countries are committing themselves to a growing involvement in in-service training as a major element in educational strategy, it would seem only sensible to ensure, by all practicable means, that "value for money" is obtained. This necessarily implies more attention to appropriate means of evaluation, as was done, for example in the Bombay Science Improvement Project described in Case Study 7.

Methods and timing of evaluation

These may be roughly classified as formal or in-formal and may be applied at one or more of four main stages:

- (a) before the course
- (b) during and immediately after the course
- (c) at intervals during a long-term campaign
- (d) some time after the conclusion of a course programme

Evaluation by participants

Evaluation may be carried out by participants at the end of an in-service course, when

teachers may be asked to indicate, usually by completion of a questionnaire, their views on the usefulness to themselves of the main elements in the course: content; methods of work; materials used or produced etc. This method is an easy one to use; but its value will depend very largely on the frankness of the response and particularly, on the level of sophistication of the course members.

It is possible for teachers to engage, at a later date, in a process of self-evaluation in which they are asked to assess the extent to which they have benefited from the course and the ways in which they have been able to apply the knowledge or skills gained to their own teaching situation. The same limitations apply here as to the first method.

Evaluation by In-service staff

In-service staff often make a useful contribution to evaluation for it is common practice for course directors, after informal consultation with course tutors, to submit a report on the conclusion of a course. This is usually likely to take the form of a factual statement of the content of the course, with comments on the response of the teachers concerned and the professional and practical problems encountered. Suggestions may also be made as to the nature of future courses of a similar kind in the light of experience gained. Such reports can often be most useful, although, as with evaluation by course members, they are necessarily subjective, and cannot by their nature evaluate the longer-term effects of an in-service course.

Where in-service staff are full-time, as in the case of the Northern Nigerian mobile teacher trainers programme described in Case Study 8, then an on-going process of informal evaluation is practicable, and leads to continuous revision of the programme.

Evaluation by inspectors

Inspectors can also contribute positively to evaluation for, as part of their normal school visiting programmes, they often make a

particular point of seeing something of the work of teachers who have recently attended in-service courses. As the inspector will usually be familiar with the work of those concerned from his earlier visits, he may thus be in a good position to judge the extent to which the new techniques, skills, materials, etc. have been incorporated into the teachers' work and to note any changes in teachers' attitudes to their task. He will, therefore, be evaluating, as far as he can, the professional growth of individual teachers and will, incidentally, be able to comment on the worthwhileness of the in-service programme.

In the case of short, "one-off" courses, this is as much evaluation as is likely to be practicable, although even here, there are limitations consequent on the time an inspector is likely to be able to devote to any one teacher. Further, he himself may not always be wholly familiar with the objectives and nature of the in-service courses which his teachers have attended.

Formal methods of evaluation

Evaluation of a more formal and objective kind becomes a matter of considerable importance in the case of major, long-term in-service programmes; and for two main reasons. The first, referred to earlier, is the need to ensure that programmes of this kind, involving relatively large commitments of men, materials and money, do in fact achieve their intended objectives. Misdirected or faultily executed programmes can be unacceptably wasteful of resources. The second reason applies more particularly to in-service programme of the upgrading type, that is those leading to the award of basic, or higher, teaching qualifications. In such cases, it is necessary to ensure that the successful participants reach a level of competence roughly equivalent to that expected of those who have reached the same grade by a more conventional route.

Evaluation by results in examinations

Written examinations to test academic attainment, and often also professional knowledge, tend to be a feature of upgrading in-service programmes. Such examinations are likely to be closely geared in standard if not wholly in content to the comparable examinations taken at the end of pre-service courses. In addition in-service trainees are likely to be tested at appropriate intervals during their programme: both in a conventional way and through the grading of correspondence assignments, where these are an element in the programme. Where an examination is also used as a means of selection for in-service training an additional check on progress can be provided.

Evaluation by results in the classroom

This is a notoriously difficult exercise, even under favourable circumstances. No reliable, objective measures of teacher effectiveness have yet been devised, and such as have been produced, mainly in the USA, tend to be complex and usable only by highly trained specialists. And yet, whatever the objectives of a major in-service programme, some attempt needs to be made to assess its effectiveness through assessing the teacher's performance possibly through his pupils' response and learning.

Requirements for success in evaluating by results in the classroom

The necessary requirements for success in evaluating the effectiveness of training by the results observed in the classroom are:

A clear definition of course objectives

The more clearly and precisely such objectives can be stated, the more effective is evaluation likely to be since the necessary criteria are thereby provided. The evaluator needs to know what is to be expected of the teacher, in terms of the organization of his work the methods and materials he uses and his relationship with his pupils. Curriculum-type courses obviously lend themselves more easily to such

evaluation than those of a more general upgrading nature.

The integration of evaluation as part of the planning process

If provision for evaluation is made from the outset, particularly in the case of major in-service programmes, it is more likely to be effective. Pre-programme testing and assessment can be carried out and the course staff involved as far as possible in the evaluation process.

The use of qualified and experienced staff

The evaluation team should be familiar with the objectives of the in-service programme and, as far as possible, have first-hand experience of it. Even so, they may well require training in the use of the proposed techniques.

The preparation and trial of a realistic evaluation process related to the course objectives

The instruments used may consist of observation/assessment schedules; questionnaires; interviews with teachers and headteachers etc. In the case of courses designed to implement curriculum change, it may be appropriate in certain circumstances to test pupils' performance on an experimental/control basis. An evaluation exercise of this kind has recently been carried out in connection with the Zambia English Medium Programme.

The use of pre- and post-course tests

Where the main objective of a programme is to upgrade professional skills, it is clearly desirable that some assessment

be made of teachers' competence before embarking on in-service training. (see Case Study 8).

With such major professional and practical problems likely to be faced, it is not surprising that more time and energy is often used in arguing the need for evaluation than in carrying it out, even if only on a modest scale, and using relatively unsophisticated techniques. The lesson would seem to be that, where serious, formal evaluation of an in-service programme is essential, provision for it must be built into the overall planning and it must be carried out by means which are within the capacity and resources of the organization.