

## Summary of the Dissertation

Author: Jutta List-Ivankovic

Title: Evaluation of Educational Projects on the Basis of Inventories. Development and Testing of an Approach in the context of European Projects.

Place: Göttingen

Year: 2013

### Structure:

#### Introduction

1. Evaluation
  - 1.1 Terminology
  - 1.2 Fields and Objects
  - 1.3 Tasks and Goals
  - 1.4 Forms and types of Evaluation
2. History of Evaluation Research
  - 2.1 Developments in the USA
  - 2.2 Developments in Europe
  - 2.3 Current State of Research on Evaluation
3. Evaluation Approaches and Theories of Evaluation
  - 3.1 The Model of Generations by Guba und Lincoln
  - 3.2 The Model of a Tree by Alkin und Christie
  - 3.3 The Model of Utilization by Fitzpatrick, Sanders und Worthen
4. Evaluation in the Area of Education and Learning
  - 4.1 Fields of Work of Educational Science and Practice
  - 4.2 Specifications of Evaluation in the Field of Education and Learning
  - 4.3 Research-Practice Dilemma

5. Development and Testing of Inventories to Support and Improve the Practice of Evaluation in European Education Projects
  - 5.1 Case Study: The Project eL3
  - 5.2 Problem and Research Questions
  - 5.3 Methods
  
6. Results
  - 6.1 Questionnaire for an Initial Assessment
  - 6.2 Process Evaluation
  - 6.3 Development of the Inventories: Documentation of Activities on the Learning-Management-System
  - 6.4 Testing of the Inventories: Questionnaire for the conclusion of the Project
  - 6.5 Appendix: Further Data from a later Use of the Inventories
  
7. Summary and Discussion
  
8. Conclusion and Outlook

## Abstract:

This dissertation resulted from a project sponsored by the European Commission (eL3-e Learning Project Cluster for Third System Organizations in Europe). The author of this study was one of the scientists working in this project. In this project, that serves as a case study for this dissertation, experts on educational theory and educational practice worked together for two years to improve the educational quality of the participating institutions (partners) and to inspire the exchange on good educational practice. Right from the start of the project a great need for evaluation methods became obvious, the partners wanting to be able to conduct evaluations by themselves. Based on this, the development of instruments that could be used by all partners individually became a major goal of the project. Therefore, inventories with a special approach were drafted in this study, that could be used flexibly by the educators to improve the quality of their evaluation tools. Compared to questionnaires, inventories are more complex instruments, they may consist of several parts and contain different scales. The inventories were developed and tested for three different target groups (learners, authors and decision makers). The data and experience from the trial phase had to be processed in the project. They should also be of use as a foundation for the gathering of knowledge about e-Learning.

Three central questions developed during the project and directed the scientific approach:

1. What is the evaluation practice of the participating partners at the start of the project?
2. Is it possible to develop common inventories as evaluation instruments within the interdisciplinary European network?
3. Are the developed inventories used as evaluation instruments in the transnational network?

Since the project partners could fully participate in the scientific process, their needs and expectations influenced the study and the results should be of use for their work, the scientific approach can be described as action research.

The Scientific methods were discussed with partners and the results were made transparent. Several methods were used and triangulated to gain a broader and more comprehensive picture of the research field. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods should also contribute to a broader picture. Based on all the used methods, the following results may be noted: The evaluation practiced by the project partners differed at the beginning of project eL3 very much. They also had very different ideas about and expectations of evaluation. But one thing all partners had in common: A desire for exchange of experience and good practice as well as support in the field of evaluation of educational projects. The approach of the inventories was very well received by the group, and the development of the inventories in the interdisciplinary network went slowly yet successfully. After two thirds of the project's duration, inventories were developed together for different target groups which, to date, are quite unique in this form. The partners were inspired by their work with the inventories and gained new impulses for their work. The test phase revealed many difficulties that had not appeared to be such big obstacles. Only half of the partners used the inventories at all. Even then, a lot of unexpected problems appeared. After the end of project eL3 it is very clear, that for a further use of the inventories, help and support are necessary, if they are in fact to be used. The potential for a profitable and practicable use is given, but forms of cooperation and use of the results need to be found. It became clear, that inventories don't work automatically, but are complex instruments, and their application needs support. The data and the findings from a later use of the inventories (after the project finished) show, that inventories exhibit possibilities to conduct further research, leading to interesting and useful results for the partners. It became clear, that even planning instruments, such as the "Blended Learning Matrix", can be developed and published, based on the use of inventories. This accommodates the needs of the eL3 partners of inspiration for their e-learning and Blended Learning options as well as the interest in the sharing of knowledge. The inventories could be used to generate cooperatively gathered knowledge, to make it accessible and useful.