

JTM 1st Seminar

“Measuring Learning Results and Training Effects – The Challenge of Proper Evaluation and Assessment at the Reactionary Level”

May 5th – 6th, 2015

Croatian Judicial Academy, Zagreb – Croatia

Using a Rapporteur from the Participants’ Group for Evaluation and Assessment Purposes – How to Select him/her and how to Assure that the Feedback is Representative for the Group?

I. Introduction.

It is obvious that the evaluation of a training course is an absolute necessity for its improvement.

Donald Kirkpatrick was the first in this regard to set out the distinctions between four levels on which to measure training courses efficiency:

- level 1 (reaction level): It is ascertained to what extent the participants were satisfied about the training programme. It should be noted in this regard that a positive evaluation does not necessarily imply that the course fulfilled its objectives.

- level 2 (learning level): Evaluation of what was learned (knowledge acquired): evaluation takes place of the degree to which the participants actually acquired the knowledge and competencies that were offered during the course.
- level 3 (behaviour level): It is measured to what extent the participants use their newly acquired skills in the execution of their jobs.
- level 4 (results level): Evaluation of the measure in which the learning activity has contributed to performance improvements of the organisation, in other words: did course participants' behavioural changes result in organisational evolution?

On evaluating training programmes for magistrates, a number of particular focal points should be kept in mind, however.

Opinion N° 4/2003 of the Consultative Council of European Judges¹ emphasises, for example, that a clear distinction should be made between the participants' evaluation in the context of initial training on the one hand, and in the context of continuous training on the other.

In Belgium, judicial training is not used as a means to evaluate its participants. The Judicial Code provides a specific procedure for the evaluation of magistrates and judicial trainees.

In this contribution, a short explanation is offered of how, on the basis of clear insights, the Judicial Training Institute evaluates its training courses with a view to amending and optimising them, thus to create high-quality judicial training.

II. Brief introduction to the Judicial Training Institute (IGO-IFJ).

The IGO was founded by legal act of 31 January 2007² as an independent federal institution charged with the professional training of magistrates and judicial staff.

The IGO has four bodies: the governing board (14 members), the management (2 members), the scientific committee (20 members) and the judicial traineeship evaluation committees (9 members). The IGO is supported by a team of 24 staff members (FTEs as at 1st May 2015) and has for 2015 an annual budget of € 5,320,000 at its disposal.

The IGO started on 1st January 2009, "from scratch" (with the search for a suitable building, recruiting staff, etc.), which complicated its start considerably.

¹ See: [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CCJE\(2003\)OP4&Sector=secDGHL&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColorInternet=FEF2E0&BackColorIntranet=FEF2E0&BackColorLogged=c3c3c3](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CCJE(2003)OP4&Sector=secDGHL&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColorInternet=FEF2E0&BackColorIntranet=FEF2E0&BackColorLogged=c3c3c3).

² Act of 31 January 2007 regarding judicial training and the foundation of the Judicial Training Institute, Belgian Official Journal 2 February 2007 – www.igo-ifj.be.

III. Judicial training in Belgium.

In Belgium, following an initial training curriculum, the content and duration of which are established by the IGO, is obligatory both for judicial trainees and for the magistrates appointed based on the exam with regard to the professional competence or the oral assessment exam.

Permanent education is not obligatory for magistrates; however, whether magistrates keep their competencies up to date is naturally taken into account in the context of magistrate evaluation procedures.

There are quite a few mandatory specialised training courses for magistrates, however: these must be followed before they can take up specific positions. The programme includes, among others, courses with a view to performing as an investigating judge, as an attachment judge, as a judge responsible for the execution of sentences, as a family or youth judge or prosecutor, as a judge of the amicable settlement chamber of the family court, as the president of the court of assizes, as a federal magistrate or as a judicial traineeship tutor.

As a rule, all these courses take several days. Their content is of a multidisciplinary nature so that often, several different lecturers are required to teach them. For those courses of several days, the IGO generally relies on an experienced specialised magistrate to act as chairperson-moderator, whose task is to safeguard the main theme of the course in question, as well as to clearly demarcate the various interventions. He/she will also explain the objectives of the various topics, give short introductions to the actual lessons, set the framework, anticipate on possible issues, etc., doing everything he/she can to make the training course an interactive one, to involve all the participants.

IV. Course evaluation by the IGO.

Evaluating a training programme and methodology is not only important: for IGO it is also a legal obligation.³

As yet, the IGO is unable to conduct the evaluation of its courses at Kirkpatrick's levels 2 through 4; it restricts itself to evaluating them based on his level 1 (reaction level), using a satisfaction survey (*'happy sheets'*). Processing the individual evaluation forms is time and labour-intensive; an aspect that increases as the number of participants, as well as the number of lecturers involved in the training programmes, grows.

Where evaluations can be done online the process is generally smooth, with little additional paperwork. However, in its initial years the IGO did not have the technology to carry out an electronic evaluation of its courses. Since 1st October 2014, the IGO has started online

³ See art. 5 of the Act of 31 January 2007 regarding judicial training and the foundation of the Judicial Training Institute: "All training courses are evaluated by the Institute."

course evaluation by participants. The rapporteur methodology has not been abandoned, however.

In the initial years, it was necessary to devise a specific methodology for course evaluation.

The IGO attempted to reconcile a number of different principles in this regard:

- It is important for participants to know that evaluation and assessment of the training is taken seriously. They must be made very aware of the fact that course evaluation contributes to course improvement, in other words, that their opinions will not only be heard but also truly taken into account: these are their training programmes and they have a right to them being of the highest possible level.
- To be able to draw useful conclusions about course efficiency, it makes sense to base them on the views of the largest possible participant group, preferably including all participants. As such, one should strive to receive feedback from the greatest possible number of, preferably even all, participants.
- Excessively negative comments will lead to nothing. On the contrary: comments should be constructive, focus on key issues, and be clearly reasoned.
- Where evaluations are anonymous, participants cannot be requested to clarify specific conclusions or comments.
- Course evaluation is best done in standardised fashion, in accordance with a specific schedule. This will allow for qualitative comparison of various courses.

In practice, the IGO in consultation with the chairperson-moderator appoints a “rapporteur”, who is in charge of convening all the participants at the end of every course day, to evaluate the past day based on a template drawn up by the IGO. Each lesson / presentation / speech / activity / lecturer is assessed as to its/his/her relevance for the participants, practical focus, structure, documentation and didactic materials used, command of subject and didactic quality. Where several lecturers are involved, they are evaluated separately. In the template, both numerical and qualitative data are requested. The rapporteur takes note of the participants’ observations and drafts a report. At the end of the course, the draft evaluation report is sent to all the participants. Once any additional comments have been incorporated, the final report is submitted to the IGO.

This approach has obvious advantages:

- For the IGO, which has minimal support staff, substantive workload is decreased considerably if the drafting of the evaluation report is outsourced like this.
- Participants know that their views are taken into account and will result in course adjustments where possible.
- All participants are involved in the evaluation process, which means that the more stringent opinions are levelled out somewhat, resulting in a balanced view.
- The fact that the rapporteur functions as the participant group’s contact means that, additional elucidation of specific comments may be obtained where necessary.
- Since a template is used, structural adjustments can be made, where necessary in regard to several courses at the same time.

For the sake of completeness we should note that evaluation of reports drawn up on the various courses by the rapporteurs is not the only instrument the IGO uses. Increasingly,

several evaluation techniques are combined. The chairperson-moderators and the members of the expert workgroup play an important part, for example; they are informed of the participants' evaluation reports whenever the next edition of a course is taken into preparation. In a number of cases, also some lecturers' views are requested so that the fullest possible picture of course quality may be obtained.

Jos De Vos
Acting Deputy Director
Judicial Training Institute
Avenue Louise 54
1050 Brussels
Tel.: +32.2.518.49.51
Mob.: +32.496.100.207
<mailto:jos.devos@igo-ifj.be>
www.igo-ifj.be